

COLEMAN, JEFFREY KIMAR, Ph.D. Educational Emancipation: Addressing Retention and Graduation of Traditional Aged Undergraduate African American Male Students (2015)

Directed by Dr. Harvey S. Shapiro. 206 pp.

This study examined the issues and factors that impact the college retention and graduation rate of traditional-aged African American male undergraduate students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in the United States. Currently, the structure of education is one that weeds out the successful from the unsuccessful, which benefits individuals from privileged backgrounds who have been provided with an education designed to help them excel. Often, the factors that impact success for African American males are related to race, class, family support, and other non-school related demographics. Predominantly White Institutions fail to provide African American male students with an environment that encourages their retention and graduation rate because they fail to support the academic and social needs of this population.

This qualitative study included one case study on ten (10) African American males who were past participants of the Rites of Passage program, located at a research university in the southeastern United States. This study examined the conditions that lead to the success or failure amongst African American male undergraduates at predominantly White institutions. Findings and discussion from this study revealed: (a) conditions that lead to success or failure of African American male undergraduate students at PWIs; (b) implications of an education and schooling process that is emancipating for African American males; and (c) creating curricular and co-curricular emancipating experiences for African American males at PWIs. Implications of this study

also prescribe a blueprint for developing a process of schooling and education that is emancipating for African American males.

EDUCATIONAL EMANCIPATION: ADDRESSING RETENTION AND
GRADUATION OF TRADITIONAL AGED UNDERGRADUATE
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS

by

Jeffrey Kimar Coleman

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
2015

Approved by

Committee Chair

© 2015 Jeffrey Kimar Coleman

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by JEFFREY KIMAR COLEMAN has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair _____
Harvey S. Shapiro, Ph.D.

Committee Members _____
Ulrich C. Reitzug, Ed.D.

Brian J. Clarida, Ed.D.

Glenn M. Hudak, Ph.D.

Date of Acceptance by Committee

Date of Final Oral Examination

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to give all glory and honor to God for keeping me through this process and strategically placing the right people in my path to help me arrive at the destination of this blessing in my life. While some are not able to accomplish this milestone, God saw fit to grant me grace and mercy as He carried me through this journey.

I would like to thank my father, Willie Coleman, for instilling the importance of education in me at a very young age and always encouraging me to set my goals high and achieve them. Your life story has been an inspiration for this dissertation. I would like to thank my mother, Cynthia Decou Bennett, for always showing motherly love, goodness, support, and modeling a passion for serving God which became instilled in me at a young age. Both of you have taught me values of hard work, resiliency, family, and most importantly, a reverence for God. Moreover, both of you have taught me that I can be the best and have the best that life has to offer.

To my brother, Justin Coleman, you have inspired me to complete this journey by accomplishing your academic goals. Not many people can say they have a younger brother who earned his MBA at age 25. You help me to stay relevant and motivated to continue serving a generation that many are ignoring and leaving by the wayside.

I would like to express my gratitude to my faculty advisor and dissertation chair Dr. Harvey Shapiro. I would also like to express sincere appreciation to Dr. Silvia Bettez,

a member of my dissertation committee who taught the first courses I took in the department and inspired me to apply for admission to this doctoral program. Special thanks also go out to Dr. Brian Clarida, Dr. Glenn Hudak, and Dr. Ulrich Reitzug for serving on my committee and giving their time and support to see me through this process. The challenge and support from each of you over the years strengthened my spirit, perseverance, and determination to complete this process and become a better scholar, professional, and educator.

I am grateful for my UNCG faculty and staff colleagues who served as a reference for me, and offered advice for how to complete this process as a full-time professional while developing academic experiences for my career trajectory: Dr. Robert Mayo, Dr. Gwendolyn O’Neal, Mr. Eric Burns, Mrs. Bonita Brown, Mr. David Schaefer, Dr. James “Rod” Wyatt, Dr. C.P. Gause, Dr. Erik Hines, Dr. Robert Aronson, Dr. Tara Green, Dr. David Perrin (former provost), and the late Mr. Myron Burney (UNC General Administration). Each of you deserve special thanks.

I would like to thank my current boss, Dr. Darryl Hollman, for continued encouragement to complete my dissertation as one of his new hires, and giving me autonomy to put my theory into practice in my new position at Georgia State University as Director of the Multicultural Center. I also would like to thank Dr. Mylon Kirksy and Dr. Kim Sexton-Lewter, two of my colleagues who was very kind in sharing some of their dissertation resources with me. In addition, I would like to thank Ms. Laci Adams

who helped me with data entry for my research analysis. I am very appreciative of the support that all of you provided.

Finally, I would like to thank family and friends in Connecticut, North Carolina, and Georgia, who are continue to supply inspiration and encouragement in my life. Among these individuals: Rev. Ernest Allen; Ms. Susan Allen; Elder Keelan and Mrs. Brenda Atkinson; Ms. Mary Bell; Mr. Alfred Carter; Rev. Hattie Easterling; Ms. Shelyne Goins; Rev. Richard and Mrs. Mary Nash; Ms. Keonna Patterson; Mr. Kenneth Rozier; Ms. Andrea Smith; Mr. Calvin and Mrs. Wanda Tucker; members of the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church of Hartford, CT; members of United Institutional Baptist Church of Greensboro, NC; and members of Beulah Missionary Baptist Church of Decatur, GA; thank you for your continued interest in my progress on this journey, your prayers and concern for me, and for creating an environment of motivation and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction.....	6
How My Background Relates to This Research Question.....	10
Central Research Questions	12
The History of American Education	13
The Context: Towards an Understanding of an Emancipating Education.....	16
Practices for Pedagogic and Institutional Change	22
Conclusions.....	24
II. LITERATURE REVIEW: THE CONTEXT.....	27
The Context: Towards an Understanding of an Emancipating Education.....	27
Historical Inequities in American Education.....	28
The Code of the Culture of Power	29
Developing a Black Identity	32
The Definition of “Acting White”	36
Critiques of Racial Theories of Academic Performance	38
Race and Academic Performance	43
Gender and Academic Performance	48
Education for Democratic Citizenship and Emancipation through Schooling.....	51
HBCUs: A Model for Inclusiveness	60
Challenges Achieving Racial Equality at PWIs.....	62
Factors Contributing to Academic Success of African American Males	64
Final Summary.....	68
III. METHODOLOGY	70
Selection of Sample	72
Assumptions.....	74
Limitations	74
Data Collection	75
Data Collection Methodologies	78
Documentation.....	79

Data Analysis Procedures	80
Report of Findings	82
Epistemology	82
IV. FINDINGS	85
Case Study Participant Demographics	86
History of African American Male Retention and Graduation at PRU	89
Case Description	98
Results from the Qualitative Study	99
Success, Identity, and Community Support	102
Financial Challenges as Barriers to Success	107
Racial Challenges as Barriers to Success	113
Gender Challenges as Barriers to Success	121
V. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS	128
Conditions That Lead To Success or Failure of African American Male Undergraduate Students at PWIs	131
Creating Curricular and Co-curricular Emancipating Experiences for African American Males at PWIs	136
Implications of an Education and Schooling Process That is Emancipating for African American Males	143
Recommendations and Conclusions	161
REFERENCES	169
APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	179
APPENDIX B. QUESTIONS/PROMPTS FOR FOCUS GROUPS	181
APPENDIX C. RESEARCH PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE	183
APPENDIX D. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION	204

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I believe it is problematic that traditional-aged African American male college students are not successfully progressing toward degree attainment and graduating from Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) at significant rates. According to Brown and Dancy,

Predominantly White Institution (PWI) is the term used to describe institutions of higher learning in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment. However, the majority of these institutions may also be understood as historically White institutions in recognition of the binarism and exclusion supported by the United States prior to 1964. (p. 523)

I feel that this is an important issue to address because the high attrition rate of African American males at PWIs could have adverse effects on society as a whole. I am personally concerned that PWIs are viewed as environments that are not naturally welcoming and motivational for this population. My interests are based on my personal history and experience working in university settings where I have developed programs to support African American male and other students from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

The African American male identity tends to be hidden and consequently overlooked at PWIs. African American males have intersecting identities of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and first generation status that present collective barriers that

other students may not have to deal with. With race being an identity that is often overlooked, many PWIs do not tend to make the college experience for African American male students a priority. The traditional approach to education prevalent at PWIs is not one that male students excel at in high rates. Many African American students come from socioeconomic backgrounds that require them to seek financial assistance to help meet the cost of education at a PWI. Often times African American students are the first in their immediate family to enroll in college and are unaware of how they can prepare and succeed through college. I personally have had to overcome these barriers to success and find it troubling that current students, more than twelve years after I graduated, still face similar barriers in a post-Civil Rights Movement era.

I can remember my dad telling me how he overcame race and class challenges growing up during the 1960s, in order to experience basic constitutional rights. He grew up in Cuthbert, Georgia, where he and his family, were required to sharecrop on a plantation. My father explained to me that he was not allowed to go to school every day because some days he was needed to work in the fields to farm. He also had to go to a segregated school which had a poor quality of resources. My dad explained to me that he worked hard to graduate from school on time even though he could not go every day so he could move to the North, get a job, and have a better life. He always told me that he wanted me to do better than he did and that I could do so because there would be more opportunities for me as long as I did well in school and went to college.

My dad instilled in me the belief that as an African American male, I could achieve every opportunity that was available to White people. It was through this mindset

that I developed an assertive personality that would allow me to accomplish my goals in life. Although I viewed education as the vehicle toward achieving these successes, I did not expect there to be challenges embedded throughout the process. Some challenges resulted from visible characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and gender; while others resulted from invisible characteristics such as socioeconomic class status, quality of K-12 academic preparation, being the first in my family to attend college, and knowledge of how to use college resources to my advantage. It was not until I left my community and entered the college environment that I realized how these characteristics became more visible.

Much of my academic success in my K-12 experience gave me a false sense of my academic potential as I advanced through my schooling. It was during that time that I made honor roll on a regular basis and learning came easily for me. A lot of my motivation came from my father as well as other African American male role models and mentors, many of whom I was introduced to through my father. My dad would tell me that many of these individuals were successful because they went to college and it was important for me to get high grades in school so I could go to college and be successful. He always told me that he wanted life to be easier for me than it was for him and that he would send me to college whether he lived or died. Often times my dad would use money as a motivator for me to go to college. Although he had not graduated from a four-year institution he always told me that I could make a lot of money as long as I completed my bachelor's degree. So I took this to heart and got accepted to Trinity College, an elite, small, private, liberal arts college in Hartford, CT, near my hometown of Bloomfield, CT.

I began my undergraduate experience at Trinity believing I would do well there since I did well in high school and that this was all the preparation I needed. I had this false sense of reality that I would excel as long as I did my work in class. The reality was that race, class, gender, and my first-generation status created significant barriers that I would have to recognize and learn to overcome in order to successfully persist and graduate from college.

In my experience as an African American male attending a small, private, liberal arts PWI, I had to overcome the race and gender culture shock of being one of a handful of African American students on campus and one of an even smaller number of African American males. I had to adjust to the socioeconomic barriers of being from a middle-class family, a graduate of a predominantly Black public school system, and recipient of financial aid whereas the majority of students enrolled at the college were from middle upper-class or wealthy families and graduates of private or boarding schools. Furthermore, as a first-generation college student, I did not have the advantage of receiving preparation to successfully manage my academic and social life in college. Instead I had to learn through experience. In some cases my grades suffered because of this. I was not aware that my formal education to that point had not sufficiently prepared me for certain academic disciplines, even though I performed well in those areas in high school. It was these experiences that motivated me to build a career that would improve college adjustment for students coming from backgrounds similar to mine.

I have worked in higher education for over thirteen years as a multicultural affairs practitioner. During the last eight years I have had the opportunity to work in the capacity

of assistant director of multicultural affairs at Public Research University (PRU), a pseudonym, in the southeastern United States. PRU has been recognized as the most diverse institution in the state university system, which makes work around supporting minority populations more relevant. I am passionate about challenging the system of education to find equitable approaches to college educational experiences for African American males. Those of us who are trying to address this issue at the university level are working against systematic disadvantages facing this population. The process of schooling can be challenging to the societal notion of masculinity for male students in general, and particularly African American men (Young, 2007). They must conform to taking orders and doing what they are told, which can be a de-masculinizing experience for them. On the other hand, schooling tends to be a different experience for African American females. They are successfully persisting through college and earning degrees while they are socially encouraged to ask for help, talk through problems, and be more compliant and accepting of authority than their male counter parts. Additionally, the structure of education is one that weeds out the successful from the unsuccessful. Unfortunately African American males fall into the category of unsuccessful when they arrive to college. The sad part is that these students are not placed in these environments by choice, but instead by their parents' social economic status, where they can become trapped unless they or their parents understand how to access and take advantage of educational support resources that will prepare them for college and beyond.

My positionality as a researcher is as a critical interpretivist. The first part of my positionality is critical because my approach to research involves the different ways race,

ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and gender interact with one another in the context of educational environments. As I explore which factors contribute toward and take away from the success of African American males in college, I examine how race, class, and gender plays a role in their college experience being that the success data of these men differs from other ethnic and gender groups. My research is motivated by studying how educational and social structures impact freedom, oppression, power, and control for Black male college students in order to influence social change. The second part of my positionality is an interpretivist because the data I will collect is based on the personal realities or truths that research participants form based on their social interactions and mental constructions. Furthermore, the data that surfaces through my research relies on the lived experiences and interactions that participants have with other individuals in society (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011).

Introduction

The issue of persistence and graduation is not just something that only I have had to deal with, but it is something that African American students have had to deal with since public schools were established during the nineteenth century (Spring, 2005). Our primary and secondary educational system is failing African American males by not being sensitive to the various cultural backgrounds that lend themselves to diverse learning styles. We have a process in the K-12 educational system that uses standardized tests to determine a student's placement in academic courses (Weaver, 2011). This is used to define a student's learning ability or inability. African American males are most likely at a disadvantage in these situations because of the stereotype threat that Steele

(1997) describes when they are in test-taking situations. He defines it as a threat that has an adverse effect on a group that carries socially negative stereotypes. Steele suggests that it is possible for members of these groups to internalize a fear of being minimized to that stereotype which could ultimately become personally threatening. He says,

Negative stereotypes about women and African Americans bear on important academic abilities. Thus, for members of these groups who are identified with domains in which these stereotypes apply, the threat of these stereotypes can be sharply felt and, in several ways, hampers their achievement...if the threat is experienced in the midst of a domain performance—classroom presentation or test-taking, for example—the emotional reaction it causes could directly interfere with performance. (p. 614)

In many low-income and ethnic minority communities, students and parents often have scant knowledge about how to approach test preparation and the implications of these tests. This was my experience throughout my schooling. My parents and I were not made aware of how they could prepare me for these tests at a young age and how the results of these tests would affect my academic placement through high school and into college.

Standardized test-taking and its implications impact African American male students differently than other students due to external demographic factors in addition to stereotype threat (Steele, 1997). Many times African American parents are not knowledgeable of the level of math and English their students should be placed in through school so that they will not be at an academic disadvantage when they get to college. Additionally, they do not know how to prepare their students to earn standardized test scores that will place them on track for successful preparation, transition, and persistence in college. It is also common that many African American

parents do not have bachelor's degrees or careers that require graduate degrees and therefore may not be knowledgeable of how to advocate for ways the school system should prepare their children for college. Their economic status may lead them to vote to reduce the amount of tax dollars spent on educational costs instead of investing more funding in the educational system.

My study examines the issues and factors that impact the college retention and graduation of traditional-aged African American male undergraduate students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in the United States. Currently, the structure of education is one that weeds out the successful from the unsuccessful, which benefits those from privileged backgrounds, who have had a state-of-the-art, generously financed educational preparation provided in their school systems (Gibson, 1986). Often, the factors that impact success for African American males are related to race, class, family support, and other non-school related demographics (Delpit, 1998). One way to examine this issue is to compare college retention and graduation rates of traditional-aged African American males to the general population using national, regional, and institution-specific data. According to the 2012 report of the National Center for Education Statistics, the most current national enrollment rate of first-time, full-time degree seeking African American male college students is 12 % compared to 62 % White male college students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a). A 2013 report indicates that the most current five-year national graduation rate of first-time, full-time degree-seeking African American male college students is 16.3 % compared to 36.6% White male college students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). My belief is that

Predominantly White Institutions fail to provide African American male students with an environment that encourages their retention and graduation because they inadequately support the academic and social needs of this population. This dissertation will identify issues and factors that can impact college retention and graduation of traditional aged African American male students at Predominantly White Institutions in the southeast region of the United States.

I will use data collected from my work as a multicultural affairs practitioner coordinating the Rites of Passage program, which supports the retention and graduation of African American male students at Public Research University (PRU). I will describe the program in detail in Chapter three. This study rests on some fundamental assumptions. The first is that the process of earning a bachelor's degree at a PWI is inherently not conducive to the success of African American males. I argue this is because mainstream institutions of higher education embrace elements of a White privileged culture and do not pay much attention to the need for academic support, financial support, or multicultural services for their African American students, particularly African American men. The second assumption is that the White privileged culture has influenced the development of barriers throughout the schooling process that have hindered African American male students in their quest to become educated. This disparity and preparation begins with the K-12 educational system and continues through the university experience. Primary and secondary schools in underprivileged areas, for example, have fewer resources to devote to individual student ambitions. At the university level, there are some faculty who do not feel that African American male

students are capable of successfully completing the curriculum of study and discourage them from taking their courses. Other times these students do not receive the appropriate academic advising that takes into consideration their quality and level of pre-college preparation. The ultimate goal of undergraduate education should be to prepare students with skills and knowledge for careers and lifelong pursuits. However, it seems that this is a battle in which many African American male students have not been equipped to fight.

How My Background Relates to This Research Question

My research question is based on my experience as a former African American male traditional-age undergraduate student and my career working with this population. I have been interested in this topic since my freshman year in college. When I arrived at Trinity College for Black, Asian, Hispanic Pre-Orientation and began talking with other minority students, it seemed interesting that there was this notion that we were embarking into a chilly environment for students of color. I remember being told that I would often experience isolation as the only person of color in a classroom or sitting at the table nicknamed “Little Africa” in the dining hall. For me it seemed as if the campus culture was moving in a direction opposite of where the Civil Rights Movement had gone. It was difficult for me to accept that this type of environment legally existed in Hartford, CT in 1997. The experience was foreign to me because I had not faced discrimination or feelings of isolation having grown up in a majority Black suburb and graduating from a majority Black public high school. Consequently, there was no differential treatment based on racial disparities. My family and school environment instilled in me a determination to be successful despite the school system’s focus on discipline and an

inadequate college preparation. There were a different set of challenges growing up in my community that revolved around self-motivation. However, once I got to college, the challenges revolved around race and privilege identity. I knew that racism existed and I had an appreciation of the Civil Rights Movement because of what I learned in school and from my father.

The false sense of educational preparedness became even more real to me during the fall semester of my sophomore year in college when I was placed on academic probation for falling below the GPA requirement to maintain good academic standing. As an Engineering major, I knew I spent most of my time studying for the core courses I was required to take, but I felt as if I was not smart enough to succeed. After consulting with the Dean of Students about this, she highly recommended that I change my major to a course of study that would be more manageable for me. Initially, I felt as if I was giving up on a challenge I could overcome, but then I realized that the bigger goal was that I successfully graduate from college in four years. After reflecting on this experience, I came to the conclusion that certain academic disciplines were achievable for students who had received a substandard quality of academic preparation, as I had, while there were others that were discouraged.

It does not seem fair to me that there is not an equal and equitable opportunity for any student to pursue any academic major of interest regardless of the K-12 preparation they received. Students who would be first generation (the first in their immediate families to attend college) and their parents are not knowledgeable of how to make the K-12 experience benefit the student in his or her preparation for college. Parents in favor of

lowering taxes to protect the household income might not understand the effect that tax cuts would have on their children's quality of education and preparation for college. However, college-educated parents are more likely to understand the importance of investing into their child's education and how to be proponents of putting more funding toward K-12 education in their community. Often times, many of them have careers that offer better salaries; therefore the increased taxes would not be as much of a hardship for them.

This research is influenced by my desire to use my experiences to improve the lives of students from backgrounds similar to mine. I want to see African American males successfully navigate through the schooling experience at the college level. This process should be a freeing experience as they challenge the societal norms and historical data that have been used to keep them at a disadvantage socially, educationally, emotionally, and financially. I would like for my research to be a roadmap to possibilities for them to cultivate an educational experience that they can use as leverage to achieve their life goals and help address the societal inequities they face.

Central Research Questions

The purpose of this interview-based case study will be to understand the impact the Rites of Passage program had on the success of its participants, who were traditional-aged African American male undergraduate students at PRU, a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). At this stage in the research, the success will be generally defined as positive, consistent progress toward degree completion and attainment within four years. My overarching central question this study will address is: What are the conditions that

lead to the success or failure among African American male undergraduate students at predominantly White institutions?

Along these lines, there are three subsidiary questions this study will address:

1. How was success defined among African American male undergraduate students enrolled at a PWI during the 2009-2013 academic years?
2. During this time frame, what did African American male undergraduate students articulate as the factors that contributed to their success at a PWI?
3. What did African American male undergraduate students experience as challenges and barriers to success at PWIs?

The History of American Education

The history of education in the United States has been structurally separated by the social constructs of race, religion, and class. It has operated using an approach of domination of the protestant Anglo-American culture. Spring (2005) explains that one of the primary reasons American public schools were established during the nineteenth century was to maintain Anglo-American values, as they were being challenged by Irish immigrants, Native Americans, and African Americans. During the twentieth century it was believed that African American, Mexican American, and Native American students should have separate curriculum tracks, which became the mechanism to provide them with a substandard education. According to Spring (2005), racism and religious intolerance have been a belief in republicanism, democracy, and equality that some European Americans have held. He states, "It is important to understand that for some Americans, racism and democracy are not conflicting beliefs but are part of a general

system of American values” (p. 6). In other words, there is no desire to change the system so that it is beneficial toward the inclusive needs of society but rather an acceptance that this is the way things are supposed to be.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the new national identity established racially segregated schools. This movement resulted in unequal funding of schools and a difference in the quality of education. In school districts where school laws did not specify racial distinctions, White families refused to send their children to school with African American children which ultimately resulted in segregated schools. Spring (2005) discusses how after the Revolution there were some Anglo-Americans who protested any educational provisions made for African Americans, arguing that it would be offensive to southerners and encourage immigration from Africa. It was apparent that Whites perceived Irish Americans, African Americans, Native Americans, and Mexican Americans as threats to the dominance of the White Protestant Anglo-American culture in the United States. Consequently, the common or public school was never designed to be common to all children, and there was a struggle for cultural dominance that continued throughout the twentieth century. I believe that Predominantly White Institutions fail to provide African American male students with an environment that encourages their retention and graduation because they historically have inadequately supported the academic and social needs of this population.

Our history has shown that dominant groups have a larger influence over government-mandated education than minority groups. Spring discusses Carl Kaestle’s argument in *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860*,

that the goal of the common school movement was to protect the morals and ideals of the American Protestant culture. He says,

Most of the common school reformers...were native-born Anglo-American Protestants, and their public philosophy 'called for government action to provide schooling that would be more common, more equal, more dedicated to public policy, and therefore more effective in creating cultural and political values centering on Protestantism, republicanism, and capitalism. (p. 102)

The common school movement laid the ideological foundation for the American educational system; however, it transpired into a process of conformity where certain groups were socialized and trained for only specific jobs that left little room for creativity. The intent was that common schooling would be the structure for cultivating a better society by improving the economic climate, providing an equal educational opportunity for everyone, eliminating crime, maintaining political and social structure, and protecting the interests of the Protestant Anglo-American culture by teaching a common set of social, political, and moral values in the classroom.

The common school in theory was not designed to result in equality in education because it was not designed to offer an education for the diverse needs of all students, which would produce equitable changes in the social class structure for American society. Instead the system was based on learning assumptions of the abilities of subgroups and societal needs. Spring explains, "Culturally, the common school movement attempted to ensure that Protestant Anglo-American culture would remain dominant as large groups of immigrants with differing religious and cultural values entered American life" (p. 98). The philosophy behind the Common School movement was to keep minority groups from

receiving those educational experiences that would move them into a status of power and privilege.

Today our higher education system is structured in theory to provide all students access to a college education, however certain groups have distinct advantages over others. While African Americans have long been emancipated from slavery, and our schools were legally integrated during the mid-twentieth century, the educational system continues to reinforce these class divisions and lack of societal opportunities based on race, class, and gender. By making both the schooling and educational process more participatory, however, they can become fully emancipatory, resulting in a citizenry that is built on the principle of a collective responsibility towards fulfilling America's promises for democracy, equality, and social justice.

The Context: Towards an Understanding of an Emancipating Education

Considering the research of Brooks, Jones, and Burt (2012) and Landry (2003), I will examine the barriers that minority undergraduate students face at PWIs. Further attention will be directed on how these barriers make it difficult for them to manage the academic demands of college and create a meaningful social life. In addition, I will look at the impact these factors have on those individuals from challenging socioeconomic backgrounds.

The research of Feagin (1992) will be used to explore the reason why there is not a more culture balance to exchange between the White and Black campus subcultures that Black students experience at PWIs. Feagin's work will also help examine if this type of campus climate fosters racial discrimination and consequently Black students find

themselves conforming to the preferences of a majority White culture. Relatedly, the work of scholars such as John Ogbu, Signithia Fordham, Karolyn Tyson, David Stinson, Margaret Beal Spencer, Shaun Harper, Carla O'Connor, and others will be reviewed to understand the implications of the resulting conflict this can cause among students within their own communities. I will also investigate the impact race, gender, and social class have on the academic success of African American students as they maneuver among environments of their family, community, and education systems.

The work of Robertson and Mason (2008) will be reviewed to explore the reasons that Black male college students are more negatively affected by these challenges than their African American female counterparts. Further study will focus on the factors that influence a belief among Black males that the climate of the larger White society, and the university environment, in particular, is not welcoming. Moreover, I will look at the implications these types of environments have on the academic performance for Black male students and their relationships with faculty in the university community.

The research of Robertson and Mason (2008) will be used to explore what suppresses the culture of a Black student when he or she has to negotiate cultural identity and expression in a predominantly White college environment. Using Steele's (1999) concept of "stereotype threat," I will explore how this can cause a difficult adjustment to the academic and social climate or a student's acceptance of negative cultural assumptions about his or her race, class, and gender. Stereotype threat will also be used to explain its inverse relationship with African American students, in test-taking or social settings, and its development among Black males in a White college environment.

Relatedly, discussion will center on how these challenges perpetuate the historical inequities of the American educational system which includes a process whereby students are separated by race, religion, and class. Citing the research of Spring (2005), attention will be given to how the public school curriculum was originally designed to uphold the Anglo-American values, marginalizing other ethnic groups. Further discussion will describe how racism and religious intolerance have been ideals historically upheld by European Americans and that these values were considered to be American values and not disputing beliefs.

Similarly, referencing the work of Delpit (1998), the five aspects that encompass what she defines as the “culture of power” that currently exist in the American educational system will be presented. These aspects will include: (1) the issues of power, (2) the culture of power, (3) the rules of the culture of power, (4) those who benefit from the culture of power, and (5) those who control the culture of power. In the context of schooling, I will discuss how the issues of power play out in the classroom; how the codes or rules to engage in power shape the culture of power in the learning process; how to obtain and benefit from the culture of power through knowledge acquisition; and how those in control of the power maintain their control in the educational experience.

Accordingly, the discussion will continue around the notion that those who control the culture of power are not genuinely interested in achieving educational fairness. Incorporating the research of Freire (1998), there will be exploration as to why educational equality for minority classes is never a desire of the dominant class. Along those lines, attention will be given to the work of Aronowitz (1997) in consideration of

the notion that racial equality is not going to naturally evolve on its own or through an effort spearheaded by those in power. Likewise, discussion will center on how it has not been a priority for them and will never be, unless we as key stakeholders make it a priority through the vehicle of a social movement.

My examination of the nuances of *education* and *schooling* will concentrate on how they theoretically present different paths to a shared concept of learning that is defined differently. I suggest that *schooling* was designed to reinforce socio-economic stratification by preparing students to fill predetermined professional roles. On the other hand, *education* indicates an individual, experiential process that has the potential to liberate a person so that he or she might move beyond artificially constructed intellectual boundaries and impact society in a democratic and socially just way. Theorists such as Hannah Arendt, Louis Menand, Gert Biesta, Jacques Ranciere, Cornel West, and others, agree that ideally schooling should prepare students to live democratically in society while education should develop out of their personal experiences and foster transformational thinking. Their work will serve as a fundamental premise for my argument that a critical education grounded in democracy, as opposed to traditional schooling, would be emancipating for African American male college students.

Scholars like John Dewey, Alison Kadlec, and West will provide a framework for me to discuss the concept of lived experiences and reflective reasoning as a vehicle to transform the mind of an African American male student into one of a responsible citizen. However Ranciere's work will provide an opportunity for me to present communication as an educational tool that educators can use to facilitate highly interactive teaching and

learning exchanges through the sharing of lived experiences. I will explore how these lived experiences serve as effective tools in the struggle for democracy and social change.

Further examination will be around how educators have not historically considered the experiences of minority groups in this process, reinforcing traditional, racially biased teaching practices. Referencing bell hooks (1994), there will be examination around the argument that some individuals, Black and White, have been led to believe that racial equality exists and anyone who desires economic sufficiency can work for it; however, modern society's class divisions are more difficult to move out of and equality does not truly exist. In consideration of some new approaches to education hooks presents, attention will be given to those avenues that will yield to the elimination of these differences. Moreover, I will explore the implications of the adoption of these new strategies.

In addition, there will be a review of how Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) offer a unique campus climate that validates the experiences of all its students by offering an educational process that is inclusive of the cultural identity of its undergraduate population. An analysis of how the factors in these environments have an impact on the success of African American males will also be examined. Considering research of Palmer (2008), and Palmer and Gasman (2008) and others, attention will be given to how these institutions have been historically successful in graduating African American change agents in society. Furthermore, there will be a comparison between the experiences Black students have at HBCUs and their experiences at PWIs.

An examination of the research by Harper (2009) around the challenges that African American male college students experience in reaching racial equality at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) will include the negative effect these challenges have on their ability to be emancipated through education and schooling. Likewise, discussion will focus on how the practice of “Niggering” that Harper presents is common among a number of PWIs and perpetuates institutional racism and White privilege. Additional interrogation will encompass how “Niggering” offers a false hope to African American males of societal perceptions and expectations of them.

Referencing the work of Ogbu et al. (1992) and Rosenberg (2011), I will explore how “being” Black in the classroom can have an inverse relationship with expectations of academic excellence. This will include an analysis of how the structure for schooling has a negative influence on Black achievement and makes it difficult for Black students make positive progress toward academic success. The research of Tyson (2011) will also be incorporated to examine why youth use the term “acting White” as a form of retaliation and a way to protect them individually and collectively.

The work of Stinson (2010) will serve as a reference to probe how the uses, misuses, interpretations, and misinterpretations of Fordham and Ogbu’s theories offer an easy escape for educators in the United States. In consideration of Fordham and Ogbu’s theories, I will explore why the shortfall of academic success by some minority students can be viewed as a student’s oppositional choice. Further investigation will focus on why the outcome produced from this shortfall places blame on the student and his or her cultural heritage group rather than the structure of the U.S. educational system.

Additional exploration will address Harper's (2006) argument against theories of Ogbu, Fordham, and Fries-Britt and his belief that there is no relationship between race and academic achievement among African American males at PWIs. Moreover there will be examination of why this is particularly the case for high achieving Black males. Further interrogation will be around the reasons they feel protected them from being perceived as White-likeness by their peers.

Practices for Pedagogic and Institutional Change

This study will explore academic and personal support services that are significant ingredients in persistence and graduation of African American male students, who have the highest attrition rate of any other demographic group. Consideration will be given to what campus administrators at White institutions should do to address the specific needs of this population. There will also be examination of how administrators can foster an educational environment that is non-intimidating and nurturing of their academic success, and deconstructs stereotypical negative perceptions of African American males.

Incorporating the scholarship of Ray Robertson and Danielle Mason, I will investigate how African American males are more likely to succeed and persist at PWIs when they are able to develop positive relationships with faculty and staff at their institution. This will include a review of what their literature says about the implications of these relationships for African American college students. The analysis will continue by exploring initiatives that campus administrators should develop to cultivate these types of interactions between faculty and African American male students, in turn increasing satisfaction and degree completion among this student population.

Similarly, the influence that role models and mentors have on academic success for African American male students when they are components of university-initiated programs will be examined, with reference to the scholarship of Palmer and Young (2010) and LaVant, Anderson, and Tiggs (1997). Another area of focus will be the role financial assistance plays in academic success for African American college students. Likewise, strategies that institutions might consider in order to develop financial resources for African American males on campus will also be discussed.

I also intend to look at the classroom environment as another factor that influences a student's decision to remain at a college or university. Referring to the work of scholars such as Robertson and Mason (2008) and Johnson (2001), my discussion will be around how African American students perform better academically when they are able to relate their experiences and interests to the content of the curriculum. Similarly, the benefits of incorporating the accomplishments of African Americans in course content will also be explored. Further investigation will center on how predominantly White universities can use courses that focus on the experiences of Blacks across the Diaspora to help address needs of their Black students adjusting to the institution.

Attention will be given to how institutional leadership should also be aware of whether minority group consciousness or inter- and intragroup harmony exists on campus and its benefits for disadvantaged groups. Giving consideration to the work of Gurin, Biren, and Nagda (2006), there will be an examination on the roles that ethnic-themed houses, multicultural organizations, separate orientation programs, graduation celebrations for different racial/ethnic groups, and ethnic and women studies programs

play in the development of minority group identity and intergroup relationships.

Moreover, recommendations will be given for ways leadership at PWIs can develop spaces for the cultural communities and identities of groups, such as African American males, to embrace and share their heritage and practices in order to feel a sense of belonging.

Referencing scholars such as Harper and Kuykendall (2012), consideration will be given to the belief that there are benefits for African American male students at PWIs when campus leadership provides them the opportunity to be instrumental in designing, implementing, and assessing campus initiatives. I will examine how these types of experiences can motivate low-achieving students toward academic success. Additional attention will be given to the various ways this can also be valuable for the institution.

Finally, discussion will be raised around the importance for campus administrators at PWIs to work diligently to foster positive race relations among all students, and how this can help create an environment that supports the success of African American males. Using Biesta's (2010) theory as a framework, all of these approaches will be tied together to explore how education impacts the subjectivity of individuals versus making them fit into an existing process. By addressing historical and contemporary inequities at PWIs, this study will probe into the impact university administrators at these institutions will have on shaping society for the future.

Conclusions

Based on the theories cited above, it becomes clear that society will have to redefine schooling and education, and the way it implements these two social constructs.

This study intends to contribute to the argument that a critical education that is grounded in democracy, as opposed to traditional schooling, emancipates African American male college students. These ideologies have also illustrated that our current society is in need of individuals who can transform their thinking to be critical and democratic to address its needs. An education that is emancipating has been offered as the vehicle to prepare students for this task. Additionally, it has been presented that emancipation is an ingredient for academic success. If college and university environments are going to be conducive to the retention and graduation of African American males, they must transform into spaces of emancipatory schooling and education. Educators should consider how they can develop curricular and co-curricular activities that create emancipating experiences for African American males. If there is not an intended societal effort to move toward critical education and emancipatory practices in schooling, then we do not offer alternatives to decrease the high school dropout rate, the imprisonment rate, the unemployment rate, absence on college campuses, and lack of fathers in homes within the African American male community.

This study is meant to impact higher education by providing a framework for creating a campus environment at PWIs that is conducive to the success and graduation of African American male students. It proposes practical solutions to increasing retention and graduation rates of this demographic population on the campuses of PWIs. Ideally, this study offers a model for colleges and universities to use to address ways to improve retention and graduation rates of other demographic populations resulting in an increase in overall degree attainment. It is intended to make these institutions more attractive to

perspective students, increase enrollment and income from tuition, and position them as leaders in higher education.

This study is the initial phase of exploring this topic and therefore continued examination could take this research further. Some potential studies may include: how this issue affects African American women; what are implications for African American families; how does this issue limit socioeconomic class potential; and what are the implications for African American males if this issue is not addressed. Due to the shifting demographics of today's society, this study could be applied to other minority groups on college campuses. For example, more attention needs to be given to Hispanic/Latino recruitment, retention, and graduation rates, as this population is quickly becoming the nation's largest minority community. Studies could also be conducted for Native Americans, Asians, and other underrepresented populations. I will return to this in Chapter five. In Chapter two, I will explore in greater depth the ideas and theories that I have alluded to in the introduction.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW: THE CONTEXT

The Context: Towards an Understanding of an Emancipating Education

This chapter will provide a theoretical context for exploring how education can be an emancipating undergraduate experience for African American males. There will be an examination of the barriers that minority students face in college. Specifically, further inquiry will center around gender implications these barriers place on Black males. Moreover, I will explore how the practice of democratic citizenship can lead to emancipation through schooling.

When considering barriers facing minority student groups in college, Brooks, Jones, and Burt (2012) present research from Landry (2003) which suggest that students of color, especially those from challenging socioeconomic backgrounds, have difficulty meeting the academic demands of college and creating a meaningful social life at PWIs. They explain, “The lack of academic preparation, absence of other students with similar cultural backgrounds, and financial need, coupled with the anxieties of being away from home, all contribute to the freshmen students leaving school” (Brooks, Jones, & Burt, 2012, p. 2). The first year away from home in a new environment can be especially overwhelming for a student of color, particularly those at PWIs. Therefore as Landry (2003) explains, these students tend to experience greater feelings of isolation and loneliness because it is more difficult for them to acclimate to this new environment.

Historical Inequities in American Education

Many theorists argue that the challenges minority students face are a continuation of historical inequities inherent in the American educational system. The history of education in the United States has been structurally separated by race, religion, and class. It has operated using an approach of domination of the protestant Anglo-American culture. Spring (2005) explains that one of the reasons public schools were established during the nineteenth century was to maintain the Anglo-American values, as they were being challenged by Irish immigrants, Native Americans, and African Americans. During the twentieth century it was believed that African American, Mexican American, and Native American students should have separate curriculum tracks which became the mechanism to provide them with a substandard education. According to Spring (2005), racism and religious intolerance have been inherent in republicanism, democracy, and ideas of equality embraced by some European Americans. He states, "It is important to understand that for some Americans, racism and democracy are not conflicting beliefs but are part of a general system of American values" (Spring, 2005, p. 6). In other words, there is no desire to change the system so that it is beneficial toward the inclusive needs of society but rather an acceptance that this is the way things are supposed to be.

It became evident that the principles of education and schooling used race and ethnicity as a way to differentiate the population, separating society into different social classes. Freire (1998) argues that educational equality for minority classes is never a desire of the dominant class. If schools educated students from minority classes and addressed improvement of economic, political, and ethical issues for societal good, such

equality would compromise the class and power status of the dominant group. Aronowitz (1997) argues that racial equality is not going to naturally evolve on its own or through an effort spearheaded by those in power. It has not been a priority for them and will never be, unless we as key stakeholders make it a priority through the vehicle of a social movement. He also suggests that the notion of an open society exists where neutrality in education is embraced, a possibility that corporations and the liberal state have discounted. Freire (1998) further argues that if education were neutral, there would be no differentiation between a person's individual and social value systems. He explains that it is impossible for education to be neutral because neutrality would require uniformity in the way information is gathered, processed, and communicated, which is not realistic in the context of current social and racial behavioral norms.

The Code of the Culture of Power

According to bell hooks (1994), some individuals, Black and White, have been led to believe that racial equality exists and anyone who desires economic sufficiency can work for it; however, the class divisions found in modern society are more difficult to move out of and equality does not truly exist. This creates a false hope for African American males who aspiring to work towards a successful middle-class lifestyle. hooks believes that it is through new approaches to education that class differences can truly be eliminated. She discusses the notion of a learning community, where difference could be acknowledged, and there would be an acceptance and affirmation that ways of knowing are intertwined in history and power relations. By breaking through the barriers of collective academic denial, she believes we can accept that the education that most of us

receive and are providing as educators is not and will never be, politically neutral. hooks suggests that the process of respecting cultural diversity requires individuals to become comfortable with being uncomfortable even if this means relinquishing one's power and control. hooks states, "Many folks found that as they tried to respect 'cultural diversity' they had to confront the limitations of their training and knowledge, as well as a possible loss of 'authority'" (hooks, 1994, p. 30). By embracing a more inclusive educational process that validates the life experiences of all students, we can fulfill the dream that education would be a practice of freedom.

Delpit (1998) suggests that there are five aspects that encompass what she defines as the "culture of power" that exists in the American educational system and which reinforces this status quo. First, issues of power are manifested in classrooms. Second, the "culture of power" consists of codes or rules for those participating in power. Third, the rules of the "culture of power" mirror the rules of the culture of those who control the power. Fourth, if one is not a beneficiary of the "culture of power," it becomes easier for him or her to obtain power when the rules for that culture are made clear to the individual. Lastly, the individuals who have the power are typically oblivious to it or not open to acknowledging its existence, whereas those with less power are very conscious of the power held by those controlling the "culture of power."

According to Delpit (1998), when the issues of power play out in the classroom, it exists in the forms of: the teacher's power over the students, the power the textbook publishers and curriculum developers have over the way the world view is presented, the power the state has in the way it imposes mandated schooling, and the power an

individual or group has over another to define its intelligence or what is considered normative intellectual ability. She explains how schooling has control over an individual's economic ability when she states, "if schooling prepares people for jobs, and the kind of job a person has determines her or his economic status and, therefore, power, then schooling is intimately related to that power" (Delpit, 1998, p. 283).

The codes or rules to engage in and shape the "culture of power" that Delpit (1998) presents include various forms of communication, interaction among individuals, and choice of wardrobe. These rules or codes are complementary to those who maintain power. Delpit describes how acquiring success in the societal institutions of employment and education are predicated on embracing the culture of those in power. She says,

Children from middle-class homes tend to do better in school than those from non-middle-class homes because the culture of the school is based on the culture of the upper and middle classes – of those in power. The upper and middle classes send their children to school with all the accoutrements of the culture of power; children from other kinds of families operate within perfectly wonderful and viable cultures but not cultures that carry the codes or rules of power. (Delpit, 1998, p. 283)

It becomes clear that one culture has sovereignty to define opportunities, success, and identity for itself as well as other cultures. Individuals who are not part of the group of influence within the "culture of power" are automatically at a disadvantage.

Delpit (1998) further argues that obtaining power becomes easier for an individual who is not a part of the "culture of power" when the cultural codes or rules are clearly outlined for them. There tends to be an ease in communication sharing when this kind of information is transferred within a culture, however communication barriers surface and

present challenges when there is an attempt to transfer such information across cultures. The fact is that cultural codes and rules are best learned through the process of immersion. When a person is trying to change to a position where they can benefit from the “culture of power,” this practice becomes fairly manageable when they are able to find influential members of the “culture of power” who are willing to guide them in immersion experiences.

Delpit (1998) discusses that the challenge is that those who maintain control over the power are often not aware of or least likely to recognize the power that they have and the culture it creates even though this is evident to individuals with less power. She explains this in terms of race and schooling,

My guess is that White colleagues and instructors of those previously quoted did not perceive themselves to have power over non-White speakers. However, either by virtue of their position, their numbers, or their access to that particular code of power of calling upon research to validate one’s position, the White educators had the authority to establish what was to be considered “truth” regardless of the opinions of the people of color, and the latter were well aware of that fact. (p. 284)

It becomes clear in this illustration that the “code of power” permits a White instructor to determine if the “truth” can be expanded to include the experiences or cultural influences of groups that do not control the “culture of power,” which tends to be minority populations, in shaping what information will be acceptable as education.

Developing a Black Identity

Historically, minority groups were forced into subordinate statuses by the White dominant group through substandard health, economic, and housing standards. They were

also denigrated by this dominant group for their cultures and languages or dialects. Ogbu (2004) discusses how this minority identity was formed in response to a social construct by the White majority group to oppress any person or community that did not fit into the standards of the majority. Minority populations attempted to resolve this status issue by developing a new identity that they could embrace which contrasted with the forced identity developed by the dominant White community.

In response to this forced merging of cultural identity, Black Americans developed their own sense of collective identity and community during slavery. Their response was to establish a new English and a Black religion to maintain a collective identity that was in opposition to the intended purpose of the restrictions placed on them by White Americans. Ogbu (2004) states, “Under oppression, Blacks developed a new culture and an English dialect different from and oppositional to the White way of behaving and talking (Green, 1981)” (p. 8). Blacks developed their linguistic opposition because they came to understand that speaking English like their White slave owners would mean surrendering to an identity defeat.

Black Americans developed a dual cultural and dialectical identity during slavery because they had to learn to live and work in two different worlds with different expectations of how they were to think, act, and react. When they were in the Black community and among themselves, they typically felt comfortable talking and doing things they would not do in a White environment. On the other hand, in a White environment, Blacks acted and spoke as White people expected them to, which would not have been appropriate in the Black community. White slave owners did not require

Blacks to “act White,” rather they wanted Blacks to speak and act in accordance to the White ideology of Black speech and behavior. Ogbu (2004) states, “When in front of White people, Blacks tried to talk and behave out of compliance to what White people were demanding. But when they were among themselves, they acted according to their cultural ways that White people hardly observed” (p. 10).

Fordham’s (1988) theory was based on the anthropological concept of “fictive kinship.” She describes this as, “a kinship-like connection between and among persons in a society, not related by blood or marriage, who has maintained essential reciprocal social or economic relationships” (p. 56). She contends that fictive kinship is a cultural symbol that is learned and signifies Black collective identity. It typically emanates in relational terms such as “brother,” “sister,” or “family” and other comparisons that are contradictory to the norms of White America.

John Ogbu’s Cultural-Ecological Theory suggests the racially constructed American social class system contributes to the academic underachievement of racial minorities in U.S. schools. Ogbu (1992) argues that the critical component in understanding cultural diversity and learning is the relationship minority group cultures have with the dominant American culture. Ogbu classifies minority groups into three categories within the American caste system: (a) he describes the people who are minority by number as autonomous minorities such as Jews, Mormans, and the Amish; (b) he describes the people who voluntarily migrated to the United States as immigrant or voluntary minorities; and (c) he describes people who have been brought to the United States involuntarily or captured as colonized.

Ogbu (1992) introduces the notion of “cultural inversion” within his theory as “the tendency for involuntary minorities to regard certain forms of behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings as inappropriate for them because these are characteristic of White Americans” (p. 8). This form of assuming is similar to Fordham’s (1988, 1996) depiction of Black collective norms, and produces the by-product of colonized minorities assuming cultural behaviors, events, and so forth that are often a counteraction to the dominant White culture.

Relatedly at a predominantly White college, Feagin (1992) suggests there is not a reciprocal cultural exchange between White and Black campus subcultures that a Black student experiences. He explains, “Integration has not meant the fusing of two subcultures. Blacks must learn the White subculture, but Whites learn little or nothing about Black American subculture. So integration, in practice, means racial discrimination” (Feagin, 1992, p. 553). To support his claim, he points to the preference for straight hair, as opposed to natural African styles, and the acceptance of casual White dialect despite the rejection of Black slang. Black students must conform to the preference of White culture in these situations. At the same time, scholars have also addressed the conflict this creates within the students’ own communities. John Ogbu, Signithia Fordham, Karolyn Tyson, David Stinson, Margaret Beal Spencer, Shaun Harper, Carla O’Connor, and others raise awareness around how race, gender, and social class impact the academic success of African American students as they maneuver among environments of their family, community, and education systems. For this study, these observations will be particularly important in the context of how African American

students must adjust language and behavior to navigate the predominantly White culture on campus as well as Black culture in various settings.

The Definition of “Acting White”

It has been suggested that the term “acting White” refers to “Blacks who use language or ways of speaking; display attitudes, behaviors, or preferences; or engage in activities considered to be White cultural norms (Bergin and Cooks 2002; McArdle and Young 1970; Neal-Barnett 2001; Perry 2002; Tatum 1997)” (Tyson, Darity, & Domini, 2005, p. 583). Tyson, Darity, and Castellino (2005) note that although interpretations of this term vary by region, social class, or age; there is some consistency among understandings.

Ogbu and Fordham were the first to identify this theory of “acting White.” Ogbu (1992) defines the behavior as when colonized minorities must choose between utilizing “appropriate” attitudes and behaviors that are consistent with school rules and standard practices, recognized and interpreted by minority students as typical of White students, and affiliating attitudes and behaviors they consider appropriate for their racial or ethnic group but not necessarily conducive to school success. Fordham also points out that this rejection of African American behaviors is encouraged by the educational process, which privileges *schooling* over more inclusive approaches to learning. Fordham’s (1988, 1996) Raceless Persona Theory suggests that African American students who are academically successful often feel the need to renounce their racial and cultural identity in order to achieve academic success. She argues that although there is an increasing focus on diversity or multiculturalism within the greater society, school personnel continue “to

disapprove of a strong ethnic identity among Black adolescents, both toward developing strong racial and ethnic identities and toward performing well in school” (Fordham, 1988, p. 55).

O’Connor, et al. (2011) present research that complements what Ogbu and Fordham present. They discuss how academic tracking and racial identity impacts how Black students underachieve because “being” Black has an inverse relationship with expectations of academic excellence. O’Connor et al. argue that Black students tend to underachieve due to an overrepresentation of them in lower-level classes and underrepresentation in higher-level courses. This divide is partially caused by limited advanced course offerings at predominantly Black schools compared to predominantly White schools. O’Connor et al draw on Oaks’ (2005) description of this as a second-generation segregation that limits access Black students have to resources of academic support. They believe that this structure for schooling proves that tracking has a negative influence on Black achievement because these racially stratified academic hierarchies (RSAH) produce racial tensions that make it difficult for Black students to make positive progress toward academic success. Supporting the theory of “acting White,” this implies that students will have to assume new racial identities to achieve academically (O’Connor et al, 2011).

Tyson (2011) suggests that the “acting White” innuendo has had an extensive history within the African American community. She states it “can be thought of both as youth’s ‘in vivo’ coding of the repeated manifestation of achievement as White that they observe in school, and as an expression of resentment of these daily reminders of their

own low status” (Tyson, 2011, p. 166). Tyson found in her research that high-achieving Black students, who were accused of “acting White” were perceived by their peers to be arrogant or snobbish. Therefore she concludes that youth use the term “acting White” as a form of retaliation and a way to define tracking patterns they observe that protect them individually and collectively, from agonizing negative stereotypes and opinions. When they are able to taunt their peers for “acting White,” they use racialized tracking to restore their sense of power in school. As a result, they are able to discount those who reject them while concurrently disclaiming that they want what the school has to offer.

Critiques of Racial Theories of Academic Performance

Fordham and Ogbu submit that the results of their study have many implications related to how schooling is experienced by Black students. Their initial belief is that their research demonstrates a need to modify the education and career opportunities that are currently presented to students as options for them. Secondly, they argue that indistinct barriers within schools have adverse effects on society and that we must do away with them. Thirdly, they make a case that the additional burden of “acting White” that Black students experience should become the focus of educational policies and remediation practices, while outlining the roles for school officials and members of the Black community in this process. In response to Fordham and Ogbu’s theory, Stinson (2010) feels that school administration should attempt to understand fictive kinships and develop programs that disconnect school and academic success from the concept of “acting White.” Similarly, Stinson encourages the Black community to establish comparable programs and examine its attitudes toward school learning based on Fordham and Ogbu’s

argument that the concept of “acting White” originated within the larger Black community.

Stinson (2010) argues that uses, misuses, interpretations, and misinterpretations of Fordham and Ogbu’s theories offer an easy escape for educators in the U.S. According to Fordham and Ogbu’s theories, the shortfall of academic success by some Black students and other minority students can be viewed as a student’s oppositional choice. This results in blame being placed on the student rather than the structure of the U.S. educational system. Stinson believes this suggests, “it is much easier to fix blame on the cultural heritage of a group of students or students themselves rather than on the structure of public schools, a structure that was intended (philosophically) to embody the ideals of an egalitarian and just democratic republic (Dewey, 1916)” (Stinson, 2010, p. 62).

Tyson, Darity, Jr., and Castellino (2005) challenge Fordham and Ogbu’s burden of acting White hypothesis. In their research, they find that this burden exists for some Black students, but is not common for the most of the participants in their study. They suggest that the burden of acting White cannot be connected specifically to Black culture. It appears to evolve in some schools under certain conditions that look as if they contribute to resentment between high- and low-achieving students within or between racial and socioeconomic groups. Tyson, Darity, and Castellino feel that researchers, in general, have not specifically focused on the process of how all students take in and make sense of different messages within their school settings. Specifically, “experiencing and witnessing inequality within schools may foster the type of animosity evidenced in the oppositional attitudes of teenagers toward school” (p. 583).

Tyson, Darity, and Castellino claim that students from all races face the same academic challenges in school and factors that contribute to the “burden of acting White” cannot be narrowed to Black students. Referring to Cookson and Persell (1985), Kinney (1993), and Steinberg (1996), they state, “students in virtually all racial and ethnic groups confront similar dilemmas with respect to high academic achievement, and they also tend to use similar strategies” (p. 585). Coleman (1961) shows that the common problem that high schools face is that learning and academic success are not priorities for most adolescents. What matters to them are looking good and being popular. Relatedly, academic success in school does not heighten popularity.

Tyson, Darity, and Castellino argue that two conditions must be met in order for a Black student to claim the “burden of acting White”: “ridicule or criticism directed toward Black students must be racialized and it must be specifically connected to academic behaviors (rather than behaviors such as dress or speech), decisions or performance” (p. 585). The researchers also present that although these conditions are met, the burden of acting White cannot be connected to the Black-White achievement gap unless these kinds of criticisms by peers are proven to be part of the culture of the local school and that they have an effect on the behaviors and decision-making ability of Black students. Furthermore, the “burden of acting White” cannot be associated with the Black-White achievement gap if the critiques directed toward high-achieving Black students are no more indicative than those directed toward high-achieving students in general.

Fordham suggests there is a relationship between “acting White” and racial performance. Fordham acknowledges that after slavery was abolished, Whiteness was

considered to be a form of resisting Blackness by African Americans. Considering the slavery experience, it was considered to be offered in exchange for token success from White slave owners. Blacks who desired to gain social and cultural acceptance within American society, sought to be as identical as possible with individuals who were recognized as White in every aspect of their life. Fordham (2008) states,

Nevertheless, despite their blinding conformity, dominant Whites deemed this response inappropriate because it negated the well-established postulate that the fundamental social and cultural practices of all descendants of Africans had a bodily basis and were conveyed unaltered from generation to generation. (p. 233)

Here she explains that Whites were not accepting of Blacks assimilating into American culture in this way because it would reduce the influence Whites had within the social power structure that had been put in place. Following the civil rights movement “acting White” was required for all Blacks and some resisted by conforming as opposed to avoiding. Fordham explains this still yielded the same outcome of marginalization and alienation through social status, employment, housing, and education. In the perspective of racism and power structure in America, “acting White” was the act of collective cultural affirmation by taking rights that had been designated privileges for Whites only.

Fordham argues that “acting White” in our present society is a scripted racialized performance where the goal is to give up one’s ethnic minority identity for success. She says, “...racially defined Black bodies are compelled to perform a White identity by mimicking the cultural, linguistic, and economic practices historically affiliated with the hegemonic rule of Euro-Americans” (Fordham, 2008, p. 234). In other words, Blacks must study White identity by mastering Euro-American dialect, shared values, and fiscal

practices in order to be successful. American society has historically equated “acting White” with success and being American. It is the prerogative of individuals who are White male to determine how success will be defined in the United States. Consequently, White and Whiteness are equated with power in America. Therefore Blacks must comply with the educational standards that Whites have put in place that create an opportunity for them to qualify to live successful in White America.

Fordham believes that there is resistance within academia to challenge structures of power. Instead of trying to address these barriers, the approach in academia is to develop a rationale for “acting White”. Whiteness that is accepted or rejected and Blackness that is defamed or devalued is positively and negatively tied to academic achievement. This is a sociocultural development that educational leaders must take into consideration within the cultural dynamics of their institutions to remove such barriers for African American students. Fordham (2008) expounds,

Like every Black person on that bus [the bus Rosa Parks was on when she refused to give up her seat to a White man], all African American students are victimized—regardless of their academic performance—by social policies and educational practices that challenge their humanity and aspirations. Their responses, I argue, are generated and maintained by an organizational structure that rewards this kind of dysfunctionality. (p. 235)

Fordham illustrates the relationship between Black people during the Civil Rights Movement and present day African American students. Both groups were victimized regardless of their educational abilities by societal practices and power structures which generate how they conform or protest to this form of systematic oppression. Fordham argues that we fail to analyze the power structure on the bus and society at large and

underestimate the power of the social composition of the school, specifically as it relates to racial academic tracking and low expectations educators have of Black students' academic abilities. I agree with Fordham's argument because this trend of racial academic tracking and low expectations exists in schooling today and reinforces the notion that acting Black is not equated with success unless one conforms to "acting White."

Race and Academic Performance

Carla O'Connor, Jennifer Mueller, R. L'Heureux Lewis, Deborah Rivas-Drake, and Seneca Rosenberg present research that complements what Ogbu and Fordham present. They discuss how tracking and racial identity impacts how Black students underachieve because "being" Black has an inverse relationship with academic excellence. O'Connor et al (2011) state,

...this theory posits that Black youth, keenly aware of racism, question school's instrumental value and interpret schooling as a White domain that requires Blacks to "act White" in exchange for academic success. Unwilling to compromise their identification and affiliation with other Blacks, Blacks presumably forge an oppositional identity—resisting school due to the strains associated with crossing cultural borders and the peer pressure to "act" Black. (p. 1234)

Black youth are conscious of the existence of racism and interpret schooling as a White influenced process that requires them to "act White" in order to be academically successful. Many Black students do not want to compromise their identity and relationships with others in the Black community and therefore abstain from conforming to the norms of school and the pressure associated with it to "act White." This

development in research of the underachievement of African American males poses the question of whether race is a factor that students will have to overcome to be successful.

O'Connor et al discuss that Black students tend to underachieve due to an overrepresentation of them in lower-level classes and underrepresentation in higher-level courses. This divide is partially caused by limited advanced course offerings at predominantly Black schools compared to predominantly White schools. However Black students are not well represented in higher-level courses at predominantly White schools. O'Connor et al draw on Oaks' (2005) description of this as a second-generation segregation that limits access Black students have to resources of academic support. O'Connor et al believe that this structure for schooling proves that tracking has a negative influence on Black achievement as these racially stratified academic hierarchies (RSAH) produce racial tensions that make it difficult for Black students make positive progress toward academic success. This supports the theory of "acting White" as it is implied that students will have to act White to achieve academically (O'Connor et al, 2011).

O'Connor et al argue that some Black students are able to reach high academic achievement even despite of being tracked and set apart from those students who excel academically. They explain,

With researchers having demonstrated that Black identities vary as per distinctions in how Blacks perceive the opportunity structure (O'Connor, 1999), perform their blackness via speech and style (Carter, 2006), regard other Blacks, emphasize race in their self-concepts, and adhere to philosophies regarding how Blacks should act (Sellers, Chavous, & Cooke, 1998), what remains understudied is how these varied identities instrumentally support achievement in racially stratified systems. (p. 1235)

The way that Black students navigate between different ways of expressing their cultural identity while moving through various circles is motivated by what they perceive as opportunities for them. O'Connor et al question what the relationship is between these cultural identities and how they provide academic support for Black students in educational environments that are ran as racially separated systems. It appears that some students are not motivated to “act White” to be successful when they are separated from other high achievers in these racially stratified environments.

Tyson (2011) argues that the use of the expression of “acting White” to refer to behaviors related to academic success is only found in the post-desegregation era and directly contradicts the claims of numerous commentators and scholars, such as Kunjufu and Fordham. She argues what Kunjufu and Fordham label as Black students’ experiences and opposition to “acting White” comments, do not seem to be racialized. The accounts that they bring light to reflect the concerns Black students have with being classified as a “nerd,” “brainiac,” or “sucker;” or they signify students’ unwillingness enroll in advanced classes. Tyson (2011) states,

I can find no evidence in Fordham’s work to support her interpretation of the Capital students’ avoidance of particular courses as racialized behavior. When compared to the comments and behaviors of students of other racial and ethnic backgrounds at other schools, the Capital students’ concerns look generic, indistinguishable from those of the average American adolescent. (p. 75)

Any student from any racial and ethnic background will reject academic activities that are defined as “dorky” by their peers.

Similarly, Margaret Beale Spencer and Brian Tinsley suggest that youth are likely to reject their beliefs when they are in an environment that is not inclusive of their culture. African American youth will not embrace learning experiences if these practices do not exhibit some representation of their cultural identity. Therefore it is likely that African American youth may classify their participation in educational experiences as “acting White.” Spencer and Tinsley (2008) explain, “It is not that they are rejecting the learning opportunity but instead, declining what they believe are requests to reject their cultural identity” (p. 21). Learning experiences created by educational leaders for students should not force any minority student to compromise or discard their racial and cultural group identity to achieve academic success.

Spencer and Tinsley argue that academic success for minority students is the result of recognition of cultural contributions of different groups in educational experiences. They state, “[R]ecognizing cultural contributions should promote healthy reactive coping, positive identity formation, and productive coping outcomes such as achievement motivation, and competence” (p. 21). Spencer and Tinsley explain that recognition of cultures through teaching and learning yield positive learning outcomes for minority students. They also acknowledge that tying the cultural heritage of minority students to their teaching and learning experience contributes toward their positive identity development. This may help increase the credibility of schooling as a resource for learning and identity formation for minority students as well as how they relate to it. This is not possible if students perceive the learning environment as one of cultural disrespect.

Shaun Harper does not believe that a relationship exists between race and academic achievement among African American male college students specifically in the realm of leadership. He found that achievements among his research participants were not deemed abnormal or characterized as White. High achievers who became involved in initiatives to support the African American community on campus felt that their involvement helped to protect them from being perceived as White-likeness by their peers. Harper (2006) states,

To “act White” yet hold major leadership positions in predominantly Black organizations is illogical. Likewise, “acting White” suggests a weak racial identity and a lack of familiarity with issues affecting the African American community. (p. 353).

According to Fries-Britt (1997), it may be difficult to establish peer groups of support for Black students who are gifted because they desire to find other students who share the same interest and determination. It was through participation in student organizations that allowed high achieving Black students the opportunity to connect with other African American students who held common interests with them.

Harper argues that students did not hide their academic abilities or keep their talents a secret because they were viewed as role models by other African American students on campus and were expected to represent their cultural constituency on campus by doing well in class and exemplifying excellence in out-of-class pursuits. The more their fellow Black peers became aware of their success, the more they were supported as high achievers. This is contrast to Fordham’s (1988) “racelessness” theory and Fries-Britt

and Turner's (2002) White assimilation theory as students did not embrace "racelessness" nor assimilate into White culture.

African American males in Harper's study developed codes of conduct that were mostly described by athletic ability and physical activity, going after romantic relationships with female students, being labeled as "cool," and other attitudes and behaviors acceptable by their peers that did not focus on academic achievement. Davis (2001) found that students who do not comply with the masculine code of conduct are picked on by their peers and banned from the male group affiliations at school. Even though the high achieving students made decisions that deviated from the norm about how they would use their time outside of class, they still felt huge support from their same-race-peers.

Gender and Academic Performance

Studies have shown that gender plays a role in opportunities in life and academic performance. For example, Fordham (2008) argues that maleness is a privileged identity in the White society and the Black community. Males are given more freedom to determine their course in life than females. Black and White males share the privilege of maleness and the power associated with it, however it is distributed unevenly. Young (2007) claims that Black males are commonly characterized as Black rather than male because race functions as the dominant identifier for them. This social perception allows for White males to be excused from situations where Black males would be scrutinized.

Young (2007) and Fordham (2008) believe we also must examine how culturally appropriate male gender practices that are supported in the Black community are

misunderstood and subsequently transformed in ways that weaken Black male academic achievement. Young describes this as being “insufficiently masculine or insufficiently black.” He states,

It wasn't race that I tried to reject. I just didn't want to be black. So I worked against developing ghetto masculine characteristics and I learned to act and talk as a white man. It didn't take me long to discover that in the right environments, especially at school, that the more I acted white, the more I seemed to succeed. In fact, becoming a high school English teacher and getting a PhD was a way for me to validate my anomalous black identity. It was also my way of claiming to be effeminate not because I wanted to be gay but because I was smart. (p. 104)

Young suggests that he was not opposed to his racial identity; rather he was opposed to the societal characteristics that were associated with being Black and male in America. He wanted to embody the inner qualities that society associated with success, but assigned to White people. Young wanted to challenge this social construct and use himself to redefine who a Black male could be by attaining education and career goals commonly associated with “acting White.”

Robertson and Mason (2008) argue that Black males feel that the climate of the larger White society, and the university environment, in particular, is not welcoming. Data that surfaced from interviews indicate that there is evidence that White professors have more academic interactions with White students (p. 75). The implication here is that Black male students are excluded from the full benefits that their White peers receive through strong student-professor relationships. The implicit negative critique that Black male students receive from their professors can have an adverse impact on their academic performance.

Robertson and Mason (2008) present further research that reveals that Black subculture is devalued when students have to negotiate in the White college environment. This can lead to poor success in adjusting to the academic and social climate. They reference Claude Steele's (1999) concept of "stereotype threat," or a student's acceptance of negative cultural assumptions about his race, class, and gender. Robertson and Mason (2008) explain, "When African American students are placed in a situation, be it having to take a test or in a social setting, in which their abilities/competence is evaluated by whites, they often will underperform" (p. 79). They further discuss that a White college environment cannot be conducive to Black male students' success when there is a prevailing negative perception of them (Robertson & Mason, 2008).

Scholars like Brooks, Jones, and Burt (2012) have studied the effect these issues have on Black male retention. Their work is based on Tinto's (1999) definition of retention, which is the principle of keeping students enrolled, focusing "on maintaining several factors including a welcoming environment, high member morale, and organizational processes" (Brooks, Jones, & Burt, 2012, p. 1). Brooks, Jones, and Burt reference research by Harmon (2002), Bourte (1992), Huff et al. (2005), and Ford (1996) who identify three specific challenges that threaten Black male retention at PWIs: (1) students' reflections of their social-emotional needs, including relationships involving culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, their classmates, and their teachers; (2) concerns of CLD families that relate to their children's level of happiness and sense of belonging to the institution; and (3) the ability of CLD students to attain acceptable levels of academic success.

Education for Democratic Citizenship and Emancipation through Schooling

In relation to this idea of national identity and social values, Giroux (2010) discusses that democratic citizenship is defined by consumerism and profit making, and freedom is equated with markets' ability to govern economic relations aside from federal regulations. However the promise of this age of democracy rests upon how the issue of education is prioritized in providing knowledge, tools, and skills invested in progressive change. Giroux states, "...education has to be absolutely basic to this democratizing effort because I cannot imagine the kind of revolutionary change we will need without a significant rethinking of what it means to be educated" (Giroux, 2010, p. 163). He questions what our world and our citizens would be like with this revolutionary education and whose interests would be served. Giroux states,

For the last several decades, young people have been schooled in a neoliberal ideology that celebrates an "economic arrangement marked by competition among technologically simple and roughly equal participants, the cutting of government down to size ('...where we can drown in the bathtub...' according to Grover Norquist), the privatizing of previously state-owned enterprises, liberalization of trade, the general deregulation of economic life and the glorification of individual self-interest." (p. 163)

Here Giroux explains that market values are given priority over democratic values, and a competitive approach becomes the way of defining social relations, and self-interest becomes more important than demands and dedication to societal needs and civic engagement. This creates difficulty in developing an environment supportive of the needs of African American males or any other minority group.

Schooling, which I define as a traditional institutional process limited by societal practices that prepare individuals to assume their expected social position, was designed to reinforce socio-economic stratification by preparing students to fill predetermined professional roles. In contrast, theorists have developed an alternative approach to learning. In this context, *education* indicates an individual, experiential process that has the potential to liberate a person so that he or she might move beyond artificially constructed intellectual boundaries and impact society in a democratic and socially-just way. Theorists such as Hannah Arendt, Louis Menand, Gert Biesta, Jacques Ranciere, Cornel West, and others, agree that ideally schooling should prepare students to live democratically in society while education should develop out of their personal experiences and foster transformational thinking. Their work will serve as a fundamental premise for my argument that a critical education grounded in democracy, as opposed to traditional schooling, would be emancipating for African American male college students.

Scholars like John Dewey and Alison Kadlec support the concept of lived experiences and reflective reasoning as a vehicle to transform the mind of an African American male student into one of a responsible citizen. West argues that it involves the exploration of the present in context of the past in order to design a future that incorporates influences from different cultures, heritages, societies, and civilizations. It is through the process of growth that we learn to live a socially constituted life where we reconstruct our thinking and our approach to societal concerns. Our experiences teach us how to develop the skill of reflective reasoning, which develops through the way we

communicate and our social interactions. Ranciere's theory highlights the importance of communication as an educational tool, and educators should therefore actively encourage students to share their lived experiences in order to develop an effective and inclusive learning process. These lived experiences become effective tools in the struggle for democracy and social change. Kadlec (2007) states,

As the intersubjective, social, and communicative medium from which knowledge springs, lived experience is both the source and the product of reflective reason. Further, because experience is a back and forth process of perceiving and adjusting to the consequences of our actions, it is "a future implicated in a present" and therefore replete with experimental and democratic possibilities. (p. 43).

Historically, however, educators have not considered the experiences of African American males or other minority groups in this process, reinforcing traditional, racially biased teaching practices. Biesta (2010) explains that good education should be a democratic process that requires responsible judgment that justifies what is collectively desirable for a democratic society. Rectifying the exclusionary tendencies of higher education and utilizing Ranciere's theories in a more inclusive way could result in a process of learning that could be emancipating for all participants.

According to Henry Giroux, this will only be achieved by a drastic revision in educational theory and practice. Related to his ideas of democratic citizenship on the practice of working to attend to the needs and interests of everyone in a society, bell hooks (1994) questions the values and habits that reflect our national commitment to "freedom" in an era that she believes has seen a rise in White supremacy and a social and economic separation between Blacks and Whites, as well as men and women. This

correlates with her involvement in the struggle to end racism, sexism, sexist oppression, and class exploitation.

Louis Menand also incorporates Dewey's theory on education which could be considered in addressing academic challenges facing Black males. He explains that the education at the Dewey school is based on the idea that knowledge results from activity. He states, "...people do things in the world, and the doing results in learning something that, if deemed useful, gets carried along into the next activity" (Menand, 2001, p. 322). Here Menand is describing education as the knowledge that results from actions designed to be educationally beneficial. He clarifies his argument through the comparison of the traditional approach to schooling. In this approach, the teacher gives students information that has been deemed important in a way that students are not able to relate to. The knowledge is not taught with a meaningful activity and becomes a false concept to the student. As a result, the student is bored and a discriminatory distinction between knowing and doing gets reinforced. According to Dewey's theory, the process toward educational emancipation for African American males involves developing activities that relate to them, so they are deemed useful, and that result in knowledge to help them live as socially responsible citizens. This becomes the process toward individual and collective emancipation simultaneously that will be democratically beneficial for Black males.

Biesta argues that there are some requirements for education. The first is to recognize that subject-related learning is a decisive component of schooling. This involves personalizing the practice of schooling by applying knowledge and ability to an

individual's experience. He also explains that content qualification is another component of good education. The content that qualifies to be included in the curriculum determines what students will learn. Biesta believes that we must focus on the process of socialization and subjectification in order to meet the criteria for education. He says

...we should use notions such as 'coming into the world' and 'uniqueness' to understand subjectification as a process that is not only radically open toward the future but that at the very same time is intrinsically democratic. The reason for this is that to come into the world necessarily implies to come into the world of plurality and difference, a world in which everyone can act, in which there are opportunities for all to bring their beginnings into the complex web of plurality. (Biesta, 2010, p. 105)

Here, Biesta explains that subjectification is a process of learning through experiences that incorporate individual identity. Therefore, these experiences involve a Black male embracing difference through interactions with diverse groups while sharing the uniqueness of his cultural identity. Biesta also declares that when subject-related learning is connected with subjectification and the content of education is taken seriously, knowledge areas provide ways for the unique identity of people to come into the world. Biesta would agree with Menand in his approach to educational emancipation, as both of their practices are forms of subjectification which makes it possible for African American males or any underprivileged population to be emancipated and emancipate their communities.

West (1994) describes transformative conversation as a tool for educational emancipation. He states,

That's what conversation is, knowing that there is a certain cultural baggage that we all have, a certain set of assumptions and presuppositions that we all bring to the conversation but also recognizing that we must make them open to scrutiny. (West, 1994, para. 30)

West is illustrating that conversation is a tool for one to use to present his or her beliefs and assumptions in an environment where they can be challenged, expanded, and/or transformed. He believes that individuals should leave public conversation thinking differently than the way they came. There should be transformative possibilities that result from public conversations based on our understanding of our present challenges and how we interpret the past in order to shape our future. West suggests public conversation is a process that engages individuals in an idea exchange that incorporates cultural heritage and diverse perspectives. According to West, conversation is a tool that individuals from all backgrounds and social statuses can use to emancipate themselves and others. It is educational emancipation because it encompasses active teaching and learning that begets transformation.

Ranciere defines education as when an individual comes into knowing him or herself. He explains that a person who reflects on himself knows that it is impossible not to know oneself. This individual cannot mislead himself but he can forget himself. Ranciere (1991) states, "The principle of evil lies not in a mistaken knowledge of the good that is the purpose of action. It lies in unfaithfulness to oneself" (p. 57). This means that people should be honest with themselves and come back to what they know to be genuinely in them. He believes that when you deviate from your true and ignore who you are and your purpose in life, you are not true to yourself. The process of becoming true to

yourself is when education becomes real for an individual. This is how Ranciere's theory of education becomes emancipating. It must be meaningful and personal so it becomes a liberating truth to the student by revealing his or her purpose in life. It prepares an African American male student to recognize his distinct significance of who he is and what has shaped him so he can participate in the conversation process involving the diverse perspectives that West outlines.

Schooling that is emancipatory would encourage the success of African American male college students. Academic success results from intrinsic motivation that a student has when he is positioned toward independence as Menand and Biesta discuss. The intrinsic motivation will ignite a transformation within the student where he develops knowledge from personal experiences and shares it with others as an authentic expression as Ranciere describes. Conversation will be the tool he uses to share his knowledge and gain knowledge in a democratic process as West and Arendt have illustrated. When conversation incorporates multicultural perspectives, it results in an equitable response to societal hierarchies as West and Arendt allude to. This form of communication empowers the African American male student to freely express his identity and actively participate in the teaching and learning process. As he becomes more engaged in the schooling experience in this way, he feels empowered to be an expert on his own life experiences, has a clear understanding of the course material, and becomes academically successful because he has been educationally emancipated.

An education that is emancipatory is one that is critical and grounded in a democratic approach. It involves exploration of the present in context of the past in order

to design a future with the incorporation of influences from different cultures, heritages, societies, and civilizations as West discusses. It would transform the mind of an African American male student into one of a responsible citizen who is able to think, live, and work toward a greater societal good. This would also emancipate all other students, liberating them from discriminating practices prevalent in a society based on a hierarchy of race, class, gender, and physical ability. In accordance with Arendt's educational pedagogy, it forces the students to consider the needs of their fellow citizens and work alongside them as they are learning to live as responsible members of society. Utilizing Ranciere's theory of incorporating communication as a tool to share knowledge, African American male students would become skilled in advocating for their educational needs through their authentic expression of how their experiences have been shaped by the various barriers to academic success that exist for them.

I feel that emancipation is a necessary component to success. As an African American male, I went through an experiential process in college that liberated me to move beyond artificially constructed social and intellectual boundaries. During my undergraduate experience, I took advice from the Dean of Students which was to utilize my resources. In doing so, I sought out key institutional stakeholders as resources for my success. Since my high school principal was a member of the board of trustees, it made it easy for me to build a relationship with the president of my college. Through this and other relationships I built, I was presented with opportunities to attend receptions, network with faculty, students, alumni, and college administrators. I sought out and secured work study employment in the Dean of Students Office throughout my college

years. I used those experiences to work through and overcome any financial, social, and academic challenges I faced in college. I even shared the new gained knowledge with my peers who were not aware of various approaches they could take advantage of to overcome their individual challenges and move towards success. It was through this process that my success in college was an emancipating experience as it was a freeing experience from my social inequities I thought I was limited to when I initially enrolled as a freshman. It is evident to me that personal emancipation is the key ingredient for success.

By examining how emancipatory schooling and education affects African American male college students, I have arrived at a number of conclusions. First, emancipatory schooling and education will be a freed intellectual expression that is transformational for an African American male student. He will be transformed from being subjected to receiving predetermined information that he is forced to accept as the truth to actively contributing to and shaping the knowledge presented. Second, African American males will become experts in their experience and grow to be intrinsically motivated to be engaged in the teaching and learning process. As they engage in communication that West outlined, it becomes a tool they use to share and receive information. Third, this kind of schooling and critical education will lead to greater academic success for African American males. Their academic success will be the result of their belief that the knowledge they are gaining is useful because it relates to them and is birthed out of their personal experience. Therefore they will have a personal desire to learn in this setting once this structure is implemented.

HBCUs: A Model for Inclusiveness

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) offer a unique campus climate that relates to the cultural identity of its undergraduate population and substantiates the experiences of all its students. These environments have an impact on the success of African American males in the way it exhibits a culture of care shared by every member of the academic community. Palmer (2008) and Gasman (2008) suggest that these institutions have been historically successful in graduating some of society's most influential leaders who boldly seek equitable social change for all people and become positive African American icons.

Although HBCUs make up approximately 3% of the nation's institutions of higher education according to Allen (1992), Allen, Jewell, Griffin, and Wolf (2007) suggest that they matriculate 16% of African American undergraduates and graduate close to one-fifth of all bachelor degree candidates. Additionally, Hoffman, Liagas, and Snyder (2003) present findings that historically Black institutions also confer 20% of all first professional degrees to Black graduate students. Brown and Davis (2001) and Palmer and Gasman (2008) argue that HBCUs cultivate an environment that is empowering through the cultural and social fundamental principles ingrained in its structure.

In lieu of a decline in the number of Black students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities according to Hirt, Strayhorn, Amelink, and Bennett (2006), there is consensus among many researchers that HBCUs stimulate an environment that is nurturing, family-oriented, and Black students feel supported by faculty. Allen (1992),

Fleming (1984), Fries-Britt and Turner (2002), Palmer (2008), and Palmer and Gasman (2008) contend that Black students on these campuses display affirmative psycho-social adjustments, cultural awareness, heightened confidence, and greater academic performance. The admissions process at HBCUs are based on their mission-driven philosophy to provide access to students who are considered academically underprepared. DeSousa and Kuh (1996), Fleming (1976), Kim and Conrad (2006), and Outcalt and Skewes-Cox (2002) affirm that students admitted to these institutions exhibit significant increase in academic achievement and develop the necessary skills to successfully compete in society. Additionally, Allen (1991, 1992), Brown and Davis (2001), Garibaldi (1997), Palmer and Gasman (2008), Perna (2001), Roebuck and Murty (1993), and Wenglinsky (1996) argue that the experience at HBCUs pushes more African American students to pursue graduate and professional degree programs than at PWIs.

There is a very obvious distinction between the experiences Black students have HBCUs to their experiences at PWIs. According to Allen and Haniff (1991), Feagin, Hernan Vera, and Imani (1996), Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), Rankin and Reason (2005), and Tinto (1987), Black students who attend PWIs often struggle with alienation and tend not to involve themselves in co-curricular experiences. Person and Christen (1996) suggest that Black students enrolled at private PWIs reported a desire to have access to student support services, unsatisfactory social experiences, encounters with racism. Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) found that these kinds of experiences caused African American students at PWIs to seek out a racially-affirming campus climate.

Challenges Achieving Racial Equality at PWIs

Harper (2009) argues that African American male college students, in particular, experience challenges in reaching racial equality at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI). This, in turn, adversely affects their ability to be emancipated through education and schooling. Though these schools have developed a number of initiatives that appear to address these challenges in reality, by ignoring the core issues of institutional racism and White privilege, they ignore the real problem. Harper calls this practice “Niggering,” or “continuing to claim an ethic of care for Black males without tending to racism and structural barriers to achievement and justice” (Harper, 2009, p. 699). We talk about how we need to support our African American males but never develop any systematic practices to undo racism or break down barriers to success. Harper explains that “Niggering” is a product of a long history of African American male college students being negatively portrayed as underachievers and not likely to succeed. The end result of “Niggering” is that young Black males assume that college matriculation offers immunity from societal expectations of failure, when this is ultimately not the case.

Harper (2009) also describes how it is difficult to attain racial equality at PWIs when low levels of confidence from K-12 teachers follow African American male students to college. As a result, students become overwhelmed with academic demands of their courses and the expectations of their professors. They find it difficult to acclimate to the campus environment and consequently are less likely than their White counterparts to persist toward graduation. According to the 2013 report of the National Center for Education Statistics, 16.3% of African American males completed their bachelor’s degree

from a 4-year institution within four years of starting in 2005 compared to 36.6% White males (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Harper argues that the individual and collective sense of belonging for African American males is threatened by a constant reinforcement of racist stereotypes that classify them as dumb jocks, criminals from the surrounding community that should not be on campus, beneficiaries of affirmative action, and underprepared “at-risk” students from inner-city ghettos and poor families. Harper explains how high-achieving African American male students are deemed suspect by their professors and White peers. Their professors second guess their intellectual ability and their White peers overlook them when selecting group members for collaborative work. In addition, they are isolated by their African American male peers for “acting White” which has been defined as “Blacks who use language or ways of speaking; display attitudes, behaviors, or preferences; or engage in activities considered to be White cultural norms (Bergin and Cooks 2002; McArdle and Young 1970; Neal-Barnett 2001; Perry 2002; Tatum 1997)” (Tyson, Darity, & Domini, 2005, p. 583). Tyson, Darity, Jr., and Castellino (2005) note that although interpretations of this term vary by region, social class, or age, there is some consistency among scholars’ understanding of the term. Through his illustration of how high achieving African American males are deemed “not Black enough” by their Black male peers and are therefore socially separated, Harper (2009) illustrates how inter-racial criticism within the African American community contributes to an environment that is not conducive to the retention and graduation of African American male students.

Factors Contributing to Academic Success of African American Males

In addition to involvement with Black student organizations, academic and personal support services are significant factors contributing to persistence and graduation of African American male students since they have the highest attrition rate of any other demographic group. When campus administrators at White institutions address the specific needs of this population, they positively impact their progress toward degree completion. These needs include providing an educational environment that is non-intimidating and nurturing of their academic success, and deconstructing stereotypical negative perceptions of African American males.

African American males are more likely to succeed and persist at PWIs when they are able to develop positive relationships with faculty and staff at their institution. Ray Robertson and Danielle Mason indicate that this “facilitate[s] healthy social and personal development amongst African American college students. This positive social adjustment is one of the best determinants of good academic performance (Cuyjet 1997; Robertson et al. 2005; and Edelin-Freeman 2004)” (Robertson & Mason, 2008, p. 69). Campus administrators who develop initiatives that will foster these types of interactions between African American male students and faculty members increase satisfaction among this student population. When students are satisfied, they favor the campus environment and are more likely to persist and graduate from the institution. Institutions address campus climate and persistence issues facing African American males by instilling in their faculty a mindset to establish supportive relationships with this group.

Creating an environment sensitive to the needs of African American males also involves providing access to faculty and staff who are personally concerned and connected to the student's success. While this is a proven approach for retaining students in general, it becomes especially critical for this community of students. Palmer and Young (2010) present feedback from Black male students who describe factors that contributed to building an environment of support for them. A common theme among these students was that a critical component to their academic success was having access to individuals who genuinely exhibited care and concern for them. Supportive campus administrators also play a part in creating a warm, welcoming environment that increases student success. Palmer and Young discuss that students find these administrators to be helpful, accessible, and concerned about their success in college. Students felt these administrators showed personal interest in them and were supportive. In turn, students equated this with the culture of the institution and developed a sense of belonging. When campus leaders practice fostering a culture of care, this tends to have a positive impact on Black male retention.

Access to role models and mentors has a significant influence on academic success for students, Black males in particular. Palmer and Young reference LaVant, Anderson, and Tiggs (1997), who find that African American men are more academically successful when involved in university-implemented mentoring programs. These initiatives provide a welcoming climate for African American males and help them develop leadership skills and cultivate positive relationships with university representatives. According to Palmer and Young, "These groups provide guidance,

nurturing, social networks, support, encouragement, and, as Tinto (1987) indicates, help socially integrate students into the university's community" (Palmer & Young, 2010, p. 154). Mentoring relationships fulfill most of the criteria that determine if Black males persist and graduate from an institution.

Financial assistance is another significant factor in academic success for African American college students. University educational expenses are a major reason why a large percentage of African American students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to attend two-year institutions than their White peers. Robertson and Mason further explain that this issue is magnified for African American males. Patitu (2007) has identified cost of attendance to be one of the most discouraging challenges facing African American male college students and is perhaps a leading reason that only 38 % of Black college students are males (Cuyjet, 1997). According to Robertson and Mason, financial assistance determines whether an African American male will be able to attend college, specifically the type of institution he will attend.

The classroom environment is another factor that impacts a student's decision to remain at a college or university. Robertson and Mason discuss how African American students perform better academically when they are able to relate their experiences and interests to the content of the curriculum. University professors can increase Black students' interest in their classes by incorporating the accomplishments of African Americans in course content. This increases the likelihood that these students will be academically successful. Robertson and Mason reference Johnson (2001), who presents that predominantly White universities that offer courses that focus on the experiences of

Blacks across the Diaspora have been proven to be more receptive toward the needs of their Black students adjusting to the institution.

Minority group consciousness or inter- and intragroup solidarity provides social and psychological support systems for collective action by groups that are disadvantaged politically, economically, and socially. In addition to Harper's argument that African American men who take on leadership roles in Black organizations tend to be more motivated to be academically successful, Gurin and Nagda believe that ethnic-themed houses, multicultural organizations, separate orientation programs, graduation celebrations for different racial/ethnic groups, and ethnic and women studies develop from this identity and intergroup relationship model. Gurin and Nagda (2006) suggest that separate spaces for intra-cultural interaction and solidarity help minority students manage the social and psychological stress many of them experience on a predominantly White campus, and provide an environment where positive intergroup relations are fostered. These spaces have a positive effect on minority student retention at PWIs because it gives them the opportunity to connect with their cultural community and reaffirm their cultural identity while on campus.

Harper and Kuykendall (2012) also suggest that successful African American male students at PWIs are often given a sense of agency and authority in designing, implementing, and assessing campus initiatives. Many times, the Black males invited to participate in these efforts are the well-known student leaders. However, these types of experiences can motivate a low-achieving student toward academic success. Involving African American male students in such meaningful collaboration can also provide the

institution with a core group of students to continually provide feedback on the needs, experiences, and desires be of their peers.

In order to ensure positive experiences on predominantly White campuses for African American males, explicit and implicit racist practices will have to be identified and eliminated. Scholars have identified the variety of ways that racism is manifested in collegiate environments, particularly at PWIs. The way this is negotiated is of major importance to African American male students, especially since they are more at-risk for attrition than other minority groups. When positive race relations are fostered among all students, it creates an environment that supports the success of African American males.

Final Summary

All of these findings suggests for reform that embrace the idea that education should make students, especially from ethnic minority backgrounds, feel as if their authenticity is a useful commodity in the movement toward creating a just society that focuses on the collective well-being of all of its members. Biesta describes how education should focus on impacting the subjectivity of individuals instead of making them fit into an existing process. He says, "...education should always entail an orientation toward freedom" (Biesta, 2010, 129). In other words, education should prepare an individual to impact society with his or her uniqueness. It should stimulate the development of skills that enables a person to think reflectively on how to foster dialogue that leads to decisions that will be overall beneficial to each member of society. This in turn will keep everyone in an emancipated state of being. Addressing historical and contemporary inequalities at PWIs will give university administrators opportunities to challenge the racist attitudes

and beliefs influencing their students. Moreover this will prepare the students to become leaders in comprehensive education reform.

Finally, this review of the literature on the retention of African American males at PWIs, has examined previous research on issues and factors affecting persistence and degree completion for this population. The analysis presented centered on the work of Brooks, Jones, and Burt; the theory of Vincent Tinto; and factors to consider for maintaining Black male enrollment at PWIs. It has been presented that African American male retention is threatened when students encounter three specific challenges. The first is when their social and emotional needs of developing relationships with students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds are not met. Second, when their level of happiness and sense of belonging to the institution are affected by family concerns (i.e. financial challenges, medical challenges, and child care/child custody issues) they have to deal with that would take their attention away from school. The third challenge is their ability to achieve acceptable levels of academic success. In chapter three, I will discuss the history of African American male retention and graduation at PRU. This study will focus on individuals who were traditional-aged African American male undergraduate students at PRU as well as former participants in the Rites of Passage Program. Special attention will be directed toward their intent and success to remain enrolled at PRU and complete their bachelors' degree within a period of four years. Accordingly, I will present my research methods from an interview-based case study conducted to understand the impact the Rites of Passage program had on the success of its participants. In addition, a description of the methodology for the study will be provided.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to analyze the impact the PRU Rites of Passage Program had on the academic success of its participants. This study was guided by the following central research question: *What are the conditions that lead to the success or failure among African American undergraduate male students at predominantly White institutions?* There were three subsidiary questions: (a) How was success defined among African American male undergraduate students enrolled at a PWI during the 2009-2013 academic years? (b) During this time frame, what did African American male undergraduate students articulate as the factors that contributed to their success at a PWI? (c) What did African American male undergraduate students experience as challenges and barriers to success at PWIs?

PRU has been recognized as the most diverse institution in the State University System (SUS), which makes work around supporting minority populations more relevant. Rites of Passage is a program formerly developed by the PRU Office of Multicultural Affairs out of a need to address low retention and graduation rates of African American males at the university. It was designed to support the educational and professional aspirations of incoming freshmen and transfer male students from historically underserved populations. The goal of the program was to develop a community of

support to help students succeed academically and persist toward graduation, fully immerse themselves in college life, and enhance their life management skills.

During its tenure, the program evolved into a learning community focusing on minority male mentoring where students were required to participate in at least two (2) concurrent courses with integrated learning assignments and at least one planned co-curricular activity linked to course material and the goals of the Rites of Passage program during the school year. Students also had the option to participate in a year-long service-learning project to enhance skills in leadership, civic engagement, and personal development. Rites of Passage workshops occurred monthly during each semester to address topics including: Academic Enhancement, Career Exploration, Civic Engagement, Personal Development and Leadership Development. Rites of Passage Peer Mentors were established to stay in touch with program participants through academic and social events, and check in with them to make sure they are finding everything they need to be successful. Finally, students participated in a group coaching component during monthly Rites of Passage Workshops to help them connect the information they were learning in their life management workshops to their individual identity transformation throughout the whole process.

This qualitative study used an interview-based case study to understand the factors that impacted the intent and success of former participants of the Rites of Passage program to remain enrolled at PRU and complete their bachelors' degree within a period of four years. A case study allows the researcher an opportunity to conduct in depth exploration of a program, event, an activity, a process, an individual, or a group of

people. The cases are confined to an activity over a period of time in which the researcher uses a variety of methods for data collection to gather detailed information (Stake, 1995). An interview-based case study is an appropriate research method for this study as it provides an opportunity for in-depth analysis of conditions that lead to success or failure among African American male students in the Rites of Passage Program at PRU.

Selection of Sample

Using the qualitative research approach defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), this project studied African American males in the setting of a PWI using and collecting a diverse assortment of empirical tools such as case study, personal experience, interview, and focus group discussion to describe meaningful and defining moments in the lives of these individuals during their college years. My research approach is also one that is critical yet empowering of individuals as presented by Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg (2011). It attempts to confront and challenge the injustices that face African American males at PWIs. It is a transformative process toward a mindfulness of education that is emancipatory from existing systems of oppression. The final component of the study includes Guba and Lincoln's (1981, 1989) shift toward action. Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) describe it as a response to a common practice of discounting research findings and a desire to create an evaluation process that would inspire the development and applied practice of purpose driven action plans. Addressing the social and academic inequities against African American males at PWIs requires this type of shift toward new paradigm work at the theoretical level and a practical approach.

For the purposes of this study, this project encompasses a case study of the Rites of Passage program including a focus group and individual interviews with a random sample of ten (10) of its past participants. Five (5) African American males who were past participants in Rites of Passage and graduated from PRU in four (4) years were selected to participate in an interview and a focus group. Although two of these individuals did not have straight paths to graduation due to military obligations or transferring to PRU after attending another institution for one year, I have stretched the category to allow for their extenuating circumstances. Additionally, five (5) African American males who were past participants in Rites of Passage but did not graduate from PRU in four (4) years were selected to participate in an interview and focus group. Individuals were identified through Rites of Passage attendance records; and consultation with the PRU office(s) of Alumni Relations and/or Institutional Research. I used a semi-structured interview approach to explore the experiences of past participants of the program. My research methodology was approved by the university IRB board.

The sample selection criteria for this study were chosen for several reasons. First, I wanted to look at the factors that helped students graduate in 4 years. Second, I wanted to uncover the reasons why students did not graduate in 4 years. According to the PRU Office of Institutional Research, the current four-year retention rate for African American male students is 72.2 %, and the current four-year graduation rate is 18.8 %. Third, I wanted to study this population because research indicates that African American male students do not graduate from college at significant rates. According to the 2011 report of the National Center for Education Statistics, the national graduation rate of first-time,

full-time degree seeking African American male college students is 15 % and the national enrollment rate is 12.5 % (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Fourth, I wanted to examine how the Rites of Passage program assists African American males persisting through college at PRU.

Assumptions

There were three assumptions that grounded this study. First, it was assumed that all participants would be willing to participate in the research study and would provide personal demographic information in a pre-interview questionnaire. Second, the study assumed that all participants would be honest, sincere, and accurate in their involvement in interviews and focus groups for the duration of the study. Third, it was assumed that the memories and recollection of participants would be accurate, even after the span of time that passed since they were a student at PRU.

Limitations

First, the selection criteria limited responses to a random selection of participants. Thus, there may have been additional data about the experiences of African American males at PRU from those individuals who were not selected to participate in the study. Second, participation was based on my ability to get in contact with individuals who fell within the selection criteria. Thus, the study may have overlooked individuals who did not respond to phone calls, emails, or no longer used the contact information provided for them. Third, the researcher may have influenced the interpretation of the findings. As part of my former role as the Assistant Director of Multicultural Affairs, I was responsible for the coordination and assessment of all the initiatives pertaining to the Rites of Passage

Program. Fourth, some of the individuals invited to participate in the study may have had an overall unfavorable experience at PRU. Therefore, these individuals may have been reluctant to discuss their ordeals for the purposes of this study. The researcher observed that one participant did not want to complete the pre-interview questionnaire and share their demographic information. Nonetheless, the researcher believed that all participants shared information and answered questions openly and honestly during interviews and focus groups. Participants were frank, cooperative, and candid during interviews and focus groups. They offered insights and shared information that was both complimentary and critical of the practices that lead to success or failure of African American males at PRU.

Data Collection

Data collection included interviews, focus groups, published statistics, and Rites of Passage student success data reviewed by the PRU Office of Institutional Research. In-depth interviews and focus groups were conducted with former PRU students who were past participants in the Rites of Passage Program. Former program participants were chosen in an effort to use participation in Rites of Passage as a case study to interrogate the central research questions and subsidiary ones. In addition, past program participants were chosen because the study is focused on the experiences of African American males in college and their participation is important in analyzing information, evidence, and outcomes correlated with student success. Thus, these individuals are sufficient for the purposes of this study.

My original plan was to conduct face-to-face interviews in person with each participant. However, I was not able to do so because the sample was geographically dispersed. Therefore, I attempted to conduct face-to-face interviews via internet video conferencing applications such as Skype or Gmail Video Chat. In the event that video conference interviews were not possible, I conducted telephone interviews. A semi-structured interview format was used where structured questions were asked in an open form, allowing the researcher to be flexible and ask follow-up questions that probe for additional useful information (Glesne, 2011). This interview format also gave me the opportunity to probe into the same topics with participants and flexibility with the wording of the questions. Moreover, this format allowed me the opportunity to collect in depth responses from participants (Glesne, 2011).

Direct interviews were useful because they allowed me to observe and understand the ideas and perspectives of participants while providing an opportunity to probe into each participant's experiences and reflections on achieving success at a PWI. Another advantage to using direct interviews is that they give participants an opportunity to share their personal historical information about their college experience (Creswell, 2003). Focus groups were another useful tool as they provided an opportunity for a group of individuals with similar experiences to share their views and opinions in response to open-ended questions (Creswell, 2003).

As part of this study, I also collected data to provide a background of the general issues facing this population. This will hopefully complement four-year graduation data that indicates a higher percentage of degree attainment among Rites of Passage

participants compared to other African American males who did not have any contact with the program. I structured my analysis drawing upon the work of Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, Corrine Glesne, Graham Gibbs, John Creswell, Robert Stake, Harry F. Wolcott, Sharon B. Merriam, Susan A. Lynham, and Egon G. Guba, and others; to see if there is a positive correlation between participation in Rites of Passage, a positive collegiate experience, and graduation from PRU.

Each interview took approximately one hour to complete. Prior to each interview, participants received a handout to complete with questions focusing on external and internal demographic factors (See Appendix C). External demographic factors on the handout included questions about their collegiate years, such as: single-parent home, income, first-generation status, marital and parental status, hometown, hometown demographics, type of high school, religion, and sexual orientation. Internal demographic factors focused on their campus experience such as: academic major, grade point average, academic classification, general involvement in campus activities, and involvement in diversity activities on campus. The responses from the interview questions addressed the central research questions (See Appendix A). The interviews allowed me to examine what the experiences were for past Rites of Passage participants and how the program provided support for their challenges as well as their view of what barriers prevented their African American peers from successfully graduating from PRU. Focus group questions and discussion were developed around an analysis of themes that surfaced during individual interviews (Creswell, 2013). Initial themes discovered in the individual semi-structured interviews informed the focus of the group interviews (See Appendix B).

These themes included: time management, financial challenges, racial challenges, relationships with other students, relationships with professors and administrators, the role family played in success in college, individual identity development, and involvement in co-curricular experiences. Open ended questions were used to initiate the discussion allowing the participants to explore and clarify their views, build off of the responses of other participants and allow the participants to guide and direct the course of the research study. Glesne (2011) suggests that the dialogue from the focus groups would provide further insight of the experiences of these African American men at PRU that develop through analysis of individual interviews. Additionally, the goal of the focus groups were to provide an opportunity for voices of African American males that are typically silent at a PWI, to be heard.

Data Collection Methodologies

In order to check the accuracy of the data collection and its credibility, I reviewed sources of information, examined and interpreted information from participants, and created deducible conclusions using different strategies as suggested by Creswell (2003). I used triangulation and member-checking to ensure validity of the data collected. Triangulation is the process of “examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes” (p. 196). The responses from interview, focus groups, and the demographic questionnaire were used for the purposes of eliminating biases that may result from relying on a single data collection method (Creswell, 2003). Member-checking is the process used to “determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to

participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate” (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). Member-checking was used throughout interviews and focus groups to verify themes that the researcher heard were true for the participants. Furthermore, all interviews were recorded and transcribed in their entirety for the purposes of preserving accurate record keeping and assist in sustaining the validity of the data analysis.

Documentation

In order to fully analyze the experiences of African American males at PRU, I collected and analyzed historical and current documentation on persistence and graduation for this population and any relevant factors associated with that. The four basic approaches and types of information collected in qualitative research include: observation, interviews, documents, and audio-visual materials (Creswell, 2003). For the purposes of this study, direct interviews/focus groups (open-ended/semi-structured questions), survey, and document review (proprietary and public) functioned as the primary types of data collection. Semi-structured interviews allowed for questions to materialize through the process of interviewing that added to or replaced pre-existing ones (Glesne, 2011). Data sources included information such as university retention and graduation rates, Rites of Passage participant retention and graduation rates, Rites of Passage participant attendance records, historical newspaper articles, historical reports on university retention and graduation, and research findings. Document review was a useful methodological tool in the data collection process. It offered me the opportunity for

further examination as well as information that would not have been obvious through observations, interviews, or focus groups (Creswell, 2003).

Data Analysis Procedures

The purpose in having a data analysis in a study is to support the procedural framework used to describe and prove the research finding. Wolcott (1994) describes analysis as “the identification of key factors in the study and the relationships among them” (Glesne, 2011, p. 209). It is important for the researcher to categorize data by separating it into smaller segments of meaning for consideration, reflection, and interpretation (Ellingson, 2011). This study applied a data analysis and representation approach endorsed by Creswell (2003). My purpose in using this structure was to give me a methodology to guide my analysis and configuration of data so I would be able to categorize, reflect, and interpret the data.

The following data analysis approach was applied for each participant in this study:

- a. Create and Organize Data – I reviewed all the data from interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, document collection, and publicized information. All information was grouped into the relevant category of data.
- b. Data Review – I reviewed historical documents such as newspaper articles and reports, reviewed data publicized by the university, listened to and transcribed interviews, and identified themes that surfaced in the data.
- c. Data Coding – I “coded” the data once I reviewed it. Gibbs (2007) suggests, “Coding is how you define what the data you are analyzing are about” (p. 38).

Data was sorted into themes that exemplified the same theoretical or descriptive ideas (Glesne, 2011).

- d. Description of the Case – After data from individual interviews was coded, each participant's experience was uniquely described. The cases were then combined into two groups of either graduating from PRU in four (4) years or not graduating from PRU in four (4) years. The common themes revealed through individual interviews were used to develop focus group questions to further interrogate the patterns within each group. Accordingly, Glesne (2011) suggests that focus groups can be an effective tool for the researcher to use to capture deeper insight into topics that develop through analysis of individual interviews or to member check the researcher's developing understandings with participants.
- e. Interpretation – I identified themes in the data to define and demonstrate understanding of the information collected. This process was done by identifying commonalities, differences, associations, and correlations that surfaced through the data. The information was then organized in a clear and logical manner. I transformed the data by unfolding conclusions, discussed topics and data results that developed, and connected the findings with personal experience (Wolcott, 1994).
- f. Validation of Findings – Triangulation was used to assure the trustworthiness of the data, interpretations and findings (responses from interview, focus groups, and the demographic questionnaire were used to explain themes).

Methods included document comparison (reviewing historical documentation and data publicized by the university), peer debriefing (using another person to review and ask questions about my research findings and interpretations, in an effort to have everything make sense to the reviewer), and member-checking (taking themes that surfaced through interviews back to participants). This provided a process for me to check the credibility and accuracy of data findings and interpretations (Creswell, 2003).

Report of Findings

I compiled, evaluated, and interpreted data in order to identify themes and patterns in student experiences. The findings from this study revealed notable undergraduate experiences for African American males at PRU. Some experiences were common among research participants while others were unique to certain individuals.

Epistemology

As I considered an epistemological framework for this study, I found that my research approach could not be narrowed down to one single tradition. Therefore, my framework incorporates components for two traditions.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) outline the following research ideologies: *critical theory* and *constructivism*. Critical theory suggests, “Research is driven by the study of social structures, freedom and oppression, and power and control. Researchers believe that the knowledge that is produced can change existing oppressive structures and remove oppression through empowerment (Merriam, 1991)” (p. 103). Therefore, critical theorists believe in using their research to create change that transforms systemic societal barriers

to benefit communities oppressed by power. Constructivism is “the philosophical belief that people construct their own understanding of reality; we construct meaning based on our interactions with our surroundings (Guba & Lincoln, 1985)” (p. 103). Thus, constructivist theorists (or interpretivists) seek to use their research to develop insight through the interpretation of the perceptions of research participants.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the impact the PRU Rites of Passage Program had on the academic success of its participants. The goal of the study was to review its findings to if there are any positive correlations with shared experiences of past program participants and academic success. Accordingly, both of the epistemological frameworks previously discussed seemed appropriate for developing an approach for this study. The critical ideology was included in the study as the research was focused on changing conditions for a population oppressed by power, exploring relationships and social structures, and producing knowledge that is transformative (Merriam, 1991). Moreover, constructivism was integrated in the study as I was interested in developing exploration around the way participants formulated meaning based on the way they interacted with their surroundings (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). In my final chapter, I will revisit these issues as I discuss how the education experience of African American males can be transformed.

The approach used in this study incorporated aspects of critical and constructivist theories (critical constructivism). This process allowed me to critically probe, gather beneficial information, recognize conditions and patterns, examine and evaluate data, and identify significant student experiences. As a result, the questions that

participants in the study were asked, invited flavorful description and evidence to support information they provided or statements they made. Furthermore, I asked each participant the same set of questions in their individual interviews. The reason I did this was to learn of and included different perspectives of individuals who shared the same race and gender, but varied in age, and other demographic factors. Likewise, using triangulation and member-checking as methods for data analysis and validation, substantiated how critical and constructivist ideologies influenced me as a researcher and the plan for this study. The overall aim in applying these epistemologies to this study was to use the results to develop strategies to improve the success of African American male undergraduates at Predominantly White Institutions. In Chapter four, I will present my research findings from an interview-based case study conducted to understand the impact the Rites of Passage program had on the success of its participants.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the impact the PRU Rites of Passage Program had on the academic success of its participants. This study was guided by the following central research question: *What are the conditions that lead to the success or failure among African American undergraduate male students at predominantly White institutions?* There were three subsidiary questions: (a) How was success defined among African American male undergraduate students enrolled at a PWI during the 2009-2013 academic years? (b) During this time frame, what did African American male undergraduate students articulate as the factors that contributed to their success at a PWI? (c) What did African American male undergraduate students experience as challenges and barriers to success at PWIs?

This qualitative study included one case study to examine the conditions that lead to the success or failure among African American male undergraduates at predominantly White institutions. In reporting the research results, the findings were organized by sub-research questions. An analysis was conducted on ten (10) African American males who were past participants of the Rites of Passage program. The participants were divided into five (5) individuals who graduated from PRU in four (4) years and five (5) individuals who did not graduate from PRU in four (4) years to identify themes that emerged. Comprehensive interviews were conducted with people who fit this criteria.

Case Study Participant Demographics

Out of the 10 participants in the case study, 90% (9) shared their demographic information from the time span they were enrolled at PRU (See Appendix D).

Commonality existed among all of them as 100% (9) identified as Black or African American; Masculine or Man; U.S. Citizens. Out of the 9 participants who reported their sexual orientation, 67% (6) identified as heterosexual, 11% (1) identified as gay, 11% (1) identified as bisexual, and 11% (1) identified as “same-gender loving.” When asked about their age when they were enrolled at PRU, 44% (4) were within the 17-19 age range, 22% (2) were within the 23-25 age range, 22% (2) were within the 25 or more age range, and 11% (1) indicated “Other.” Participants reported their religious affiliation while at PRU as follows: 11% (1) identified as Baptist, 11% (1) identified as Christian-Non-denominational, 56% (5) identified as Christian, 11% (1) identified as “Not Applicable.”

Out of the 9 participants who reported their hometown and home state, 89% (8) were from North Carolina, and 11% (1) was from Maryland. The hometown breakdown was as follows: 11% (1) from Bowie, MD; 11% (1) from Cary, NC; 22% (2) from Charlotte, NC; 22% (2) from Durham, NC; 11% (1) from Fayetteville, NC; 11% (1) from Knightdale, NC; 11% (1) from Oxford, NC.

In examining findings of what was reported for each person’s high school academic information, I found that 89% (8) attended a public high school, and 11% (1) attended a magnet high school. The breakdown of the years that individuals graduated from high school was as follows: 11% (1) graduated in 2004, 11% (1) graduated in 2005,

11% (1) graduated in 2006, 11% (1) graduated in 2007, 22% (2) graduated in 2008, 33% (3) graduated in 2009. The reported high school grade point averages ranged from B to A. All participants indicated that they took the SAT with scores ranging from 1050 to 1800, although some people could not remember their score.

Out of the 9 participants who reported their college academic information, 11% (1) first enrolled at PRU Fall 2004, 11% (1) first enrolled at PRU Fall 2005, 11% (1) first enrolled at PRU Fall 2007, 11% (1) first enrolled at PRU Fall 2008, 33% (3) first enrolled at PRU Fall 2009, and 11% (1) reported “Other.” Within this group, 89% (8) were classified as first-time freshmen when they enrolled, and 11% (1) was classified as a second-year freshman when he enrolled. With regard to retention, 11% (1) attended another 4 year institution prior to coming to PRU, 11% (1) transferred to PRU from another institution prior to coming to PRU, and 11% (1) transferred from PRU to another. When participants were asked if they graduated from PRU, 67% (6) indicated they did while 33% (3) indicated they did not. Furthermore, 56% (5) graduated from PRU in 4 years while 44% (4) did not. All individuals reported that their enrollment status was full time (12+ hours) when they left PRU and the cumulative grade point averages ranged from 2.0 to 3.3, with one person indicating “Other” for their GPA.

Participants reported diversity in the subject area of their academic major which consisted of: Computer Science, History with a Teaching Licensure, Accounting, African American Studies, Business Administration, Kinesiology, History, Music Education, and Theatre. Some of their career goals during their time at PRU included: Software Developer, Music Educator, Grad School, Educator, Accountant, Performer in Musical

Theatre, Occupational Therapist. During their time at PRU, they were involved in a wide range of campus activities and diversity-related experiences outside of class.

The findings from what was reported for family information was as follows: 22% (2) indicated that they were the only family member living in their home during their time at PRU, 56% (5) shared that 3 family members, including themselves, lived in their home during their time at PRU, 22% (2) indicated that 4 family members, including themselves, lived in their home during their time at PRU. None of them lived with their parents during this time and all of them reported that they were single.

In regards to parent/guardian information, occupations reported for their fathers consisted of: Unemployed, Electrical Engineer, Navy, Deceased, Post Office Worker, Pastor and Electrician, Practice Manager at Duke Health Services. Occupations reported for their mothers consisted of: Budget Analyst, Pastor and Daycare Instructor, Administrative Assistant, Employee for the City of Durham, Social Worker, Unemployed, Accountant, and Deceased. When asked if parent(s)/guardian(s) that participants lived with prior to their 18th birthday graduated from a 4 year institution, 55% (5) reported that none of their parents graduated, 22% (2) reported that only their mother graduated, 22% (2) reported that both parents graduated, while no one reported that only their father graduated.

When participants were asked about their financial information, they indicated that their parent(s), guardian(s), or spouse's annual income (after taxes) as classified by the US Department of Education, during their time at PRU was as follows: 11% (1) reported within the range of \$0 - \$17,505, 11% (1) reported within the range of \$17,506 -

\$23,595, 11% (1) reported within the range of \$29,686 - \$35, 775, 22% (2) reported within the range of \$41,866 - \$47,955, 11% (1) reported within the range of \$54,046 - \$60,135. Respondents indicated that their annual income (after taxes) as classified by the US Department of Education, during their time at PRU was as follows: 78% (7) reported within the range of \$0 - \$17,505, 22% (2) reported “Other.” All participants disclosed that they applied for financial aid at some point during their time at PRU. When asked if they were employed at a job during their time at PRU, 89% (8) responded that they were and 11% (1) responded that he was not. The amount of hours they reported working per week ranged from 10 – 40 hours at the job(s) they were employed at. One individual specified that his employment was classified as a work study position, which was funded through his financial aid award package. He reported that he worked 20 hours per week in this capacity.

History of African American Male Retention and Graduation at PRU

Public Research University was originally established as the State Normal and Industrial School. After 1897, it became known as the State Normal and Industrial College until 1919. From 1919-1931, the university was known as the State College for Women, then its name evolved to Woman's College of the State University System from 1932 to 1963. Integration began in 1956 when the first African American students were admitted. In 1963, the name of the institution was changed to Public Research University. Later in 1964 the university became coeducational and began admitting its first male students.

The first African American male student graduated from PRU in 1968. If graduation was based on a four year time period, one could estimate that this student initially enrolled in 1964 with the first male students. The second student finished his degree in August of 1969 but did not officially graduate until 1970. After that, it appears that graduation rates from 1970 to 1976 fluctuated in increments of three students each year until 1974 and 1975 when it remained constant at nine graduates. The rate was also constant in 1971 and 1972 at three students for each of those years. One might come to the conclusion that more African American male students were admitted to the university in 1970 if graduation was the result of a 4 year curriculum. It should be noted that some of the first African American male graduates completed their graduate degrees at PRU but it is not clear what the exact number was of those who did between 1968 and 1976. According to the State University System Fall 2007 Enrollment Report, there were a total of 327 African American students enrolled in 1972 (4.4 % of the student population).

Between 1978 and 1980, approximately 7000 undergraduates and 3000 graduates were enrolled at PRU. It was estimated that 70 % of the total student population was female (Reichard & Hengstler, 1981). According to Mingle (1980), Black students made up 9.3 % of the total college enrollment in the United States and 14.9 % of the total college enrollment in the South in 1978. There were approximately 60 % Black college students enrolled in Predominantly White Institutions in the South. These enrollment increases were attributed to collective efforts of the federal government, state university systems, and individual institutions to recruit and retain minority students. This made it necessary to better understand how cultural background, value systems, interests and any

other needs impact a Black student's experience at a Predominantly White Institution than it would for a White student (Jones, 1979; Peterson et al, 1978). It is evident that even during this time recruitment of minority students was not the only goal but retention was important as well. It was key to find ways to keep these students at the university by finding ways to embrace their cultural identity and address their needs.

According to Reichard and Hengstler (1981), Black students at PRU typically came from families with lower economic incomes who were living in either neighborhoods that were integrated or majority Black. Consequently, financial aid became an important deciding factor for a Black student to attend PRU. Black students reported that the most important resource for them was assistance in finding part-time jobs and suggested that the university invest in an employment center to help them find summer and part-time jobs which could help recruit and retain minority students. This request was significant during this time as the state and federal governments were considering budget cuts to student aid and job location centers. According to Cuyjet (2006), African American male students at Predominantly White Institutions have had financial hardships, have been academically unprepared, and have not successfully acculturated since the integration of universities. Therefore one could assume that there was a low enrollment rate of African American male students at PRU during this time due to limited financial resources.

What was also notable during this time was that Black students generally viewed themselves as inadequately prepared for college math due to the fact that they scored lower on the SAT than their White counterparts. It became evident that Black students

were in need of academic support to strengthen math and study skills. It was believed that addressing these issues would result in an increase in student retention rates. This was a major concern for all colleges and universities as enrollments were either stagnant or declining during this time period (Reichard & Hengstler, 1981). According to Brooks, Jones, and Burt, “The lack of academic preparation, absence of other students with similar cultural backgrounds, and financial need, coupled with the anxieties of being away from home, all contribute to freshmen students leaving school” (Brooks, Jones, & Burt, 2012, p. 2). Therefore, it appears that academic ability and pre-college preparation was another factor that had an adverse effect on the enrollment and retention rates for Black students.

The Black student attending PRU during this time could be described as one who entered the university with some insecurity about his or her academic preparation and a lack of understanding of what the nature of the college experience would present to them. The college experience was unfamiliar to Black students due to the fact that only 35 % of them had fathers who attended some college compared to 65 % of White students who had fathers who attended some college and received significantly more parental encouragement to attend PRU than Black students did (Reichard & Hengstler, 1981). According to Thayer (2000), the college experience has a negative impact on educational attainment for students who are first in their family to attend college.

Another concern directly impacting enrollment and retention of Black students at PRU was social and cultural life for them. Blacks were more interested than Whites in participating in student government and activities focusing on race or ethnic identity such

as the Neo-Black Society. Black students felt that it was essential to be a part of organizations that enhanced their understanding of cultural, social, and political achievements of Black people. In general Black students viewed social activities as an important factor in evaluating their experience at PRU. They were more interested in group or team sports than individual athletic activities. As a result it became evident that it was important to recognize and address the different social interests of Black students as they arrived at the university (Reichard & Hengstler, 1981). Tinto (1993) suggests that students need to be integrated in the campus culture in order for them to be retained through graduation. This integration means that students unlearn their culture in exchange for the recognized campus culture. However Museus et al. (2008) explain that when minority students increase their chances for graduation when they are able to affirm their cultural identity.

Negative perception of the racial climate on campus is another factor that negatively impacts enrollment and retention for Black students. Black students reported that they had a significantly larger number of experiences where attention was brought to their race than White students. Therefore they felt a strong need for a Black student organization. This supported the notion that there was a need for more options for Black students to take advantage of in order for them to be integrally involved in the social and academic life of the university. According to Tierney (1999), African American students who are satisfied with the racial climate on campus are more academically involved, and more likely to graduate. Brooks, Jones, and Burt state, "The cultural differences of African American male students need to be considered in efforts to retain them" (Brooks,

Jones, & Burt, 2012, p. 2). Thus one may assume that the enrollment and retention of African American male students was low due to the negative perception of the racial climate on campus among Black students.

Another contributing factor toward enrollment and retention of African American male students is positive relationships with faculty members. Faculty was identified as an ideal resource in this process but Black students did not view them in this way.

According to Richard et al. (1981), Black students are more likely not to feel that professors go out of their way to help them. Consequently, it was recommended by Reichard and Hengstler that more attention be placed on the faculty-Black student interaction. Brooks, Jones, and Burt (2012) explain that mentoring from faculty members is an effective strategy in providing support to help African American male students overcome barriers that prevent them from successfully completing their degree. Lavant et al. (1997), discusses how vital mentoring is in helping African American males survive and empowering them to make gains in higher education. Therefore, it can also be assumed that the enrollment and retention of African American male students was low because of a lack of interaction among African American students and faculty.

In a February 19, 1988 article in the City Gazette, President James W. Smith said that the university needed to find a way to raise the level of understanding around its cultural diversity and appeal to more Black faculty. In 1988, approximately 10 % of the 10,098 students (109 students) enrolled were Black. During this time 10 out of 563 (1.8%) of PRU's full-time faculty were Black. Therefore based on these numbers and the enrollment numbers from 1972 and 1978 to 1980, one can assume that there had always

been a higher percentage of Black students to Black faculty. Additionally, one could assume that the enrollment and retention of African American male students continued to be a challenge for the university.

The major motivation for initiatives around enrollment and retention of minority students was in response to the 1981 federal court decree for the State University System to end a 10-year desegregation battle with the federal government over the state's universities. As a result, the SUS, which is composed of PRU and 15 other universities, began operating under this jurisdiction and set a goal of 10.6 % Black enrollment at its Predominantly White Campuses (Wesley, 1988). One of the ways PRU responded to this mandate was to develop a Minority-Student Visitation during the 1980s, as an annual initiative to recruit higher numbers of Blacks, Asians, and other minority students. Although PRU was making intentional efforts to racially integrate the student population, it continued to struggle with managing cultural climate issues that would impact the retention rates for its African American male students.

In 1988, Black students also raised concern about their dissatisfaction with the cultural climate for them on campus. Their concerns centered around hiring more Black faculty and staff, getting more scholarships, improving the Black Studies Program, and placing more emphasis on the Black perspective in the curriculum. Bradley Mitchell, president of Student Government Association, stated in the February 19, 1988, City Gazette article,

When a Black student is in the classroom and a teacher talks about the contributions of Whites without mentioning what Blacks have contributed, that sends a message. It sends a message to White students that White people did everything and it gives Blacks a feeling of inferiority. So racism is perpetuated. (Berry, 1988, D1, D2)

The students felt that the Black Studies Program needed more faculty, a full-time program director, a permanent office space, and a budget to cover release time for faculty who wanted to teach a Black Studies course. The Black Studies Program began in 1982 and was offered as a student-designed minor in response to demands from Black students of how the university should address racial conflict they were experiencing. In 1986 Black Studies Specific courses were first offered however the program did not began offering a bachelor's degree until 2002 after its name change to African American Studies. Brooks, Jones, and Burt discuss how courses addressing the needs of Black people throughout the Diaspora could peak the attention of Black males. They explain, "By offering such empowering coursework, universities are presenting a number of possible benefits for its students. Such submissions actively influence the intended students' self-esteem" (Brooks, Jones, & Burt, 2012, p. 4). One could assume that the lack of faculty and staff to adequately support the Black Studies program also contributed to an adverse effect on African American male student retention and enrollment rates.

Financial challenges continued to present concerns for African American students. Students maintained to express concern over insufficient financial aid funds available. During this time the university was planning to offer six \$1,500 annual scholarships to Black students for the fall of 1988. President Smith was also concerned about this and explained that scholarship money was limited. He also shared that the

university had other scholarship and financial aid available to all students based on financial need. It appears that the limited financial aid may have presented challenges for the university to recruit African American male students and may have continued to have a direct impact on the low enrollment and retention numbers for this population.

Although there was a slight decline in the national Black enrollment rate from 1976 to 1986, the Black enrollment rate increased by 22 % on all the campuses in the SUS. PRU was one of four traditionally White campuses that had an increase in the percentage of Black student enrollment. In 1989, PRU reported 9,860 full-time students, which was 270 students above its projected goal. This increased enrollment was attributed to increased retention rates and a larger number of transfer students than expected (Patterson, 1989). The increase may have also resulted from the developments of the Black Studies Program and faculty to teach the courses, and enhancement of financial aid. One may also assume that interactions between faculty and African American students increased through the development of the Black Studies Program.

PRU began measuring retention and graduation on a consistent basis with the freshman class that enrolled for the first time in fall 1998. The four year retention rate for Black males was 50.7% and the four year graduation rate was 12.3%. Moreover, for the freshman class that enrolled for the first time in fall 2001, the four year retention rate for Black males was 58.9% and the four year graduation rate was 16.4%. More recently, students who enrolled as first time freshmen during fall 2005 had a four year retention rate of 63.1% and a graduation rate of 21.4% for Black males. We can observe that there has been a slight increase in retention and graduation of African American males between

2001 and 2009, however retention is slightly above 63% and graduation is below 25% which indicates the need for concern.

Case Description

Research indicates that African American male students do not graduate from college at significant rates. According to the 2011 report of the National Center for Education Statistics, the national graduation rate of first-time, full-time degree seeking African American male college students is 15 % and the national enrollment rate is 12.5 % (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). According to the PRU Office of Institutional Research, the current four year retention rate for African American male students is 72.2 %, and the current four year graduation rate is 18.8 %.

The retention rate for Rites of Passage increased to approximately 80.65% from the 2011-2012 academic year to the 2012-2013 academic year. In addition, there was a higher 4-year graduation rate (26.8%) of Rites of Passage program participants compared to the 4-year graduation rate (17.6%) of non-participants who were African American male. This suggests there was a positive correlation between participation in Rites of Passage during the 2009-2010 year and graduation from PRU (PRU Office of Institutional Research, email communications, January 30, 2014).

This section has presented a description of the case study of the Rites of Passage Program and its development at PRU. The next part of this chapter was organized around the themes that surfaced through the case study. Themes include: (a) defining success; (b) factors contributing to success; (c) financial challenges as barriers to success; (d) racial challenges as barriers to success; and (e) gender challenges as barriers to success. The

first research question to be addressed is *How was success defined among African American male undergraduate students enrolled at a PWI during the 2009-2013 academic years?*

Results from the Qualitative Study

Defining success. As I interviewed past program participants who graduated in four years, I found evidence that success was defined by individual identity development. They discussed that self-discovery was a necessary component in becoming successful. It was a shared belief among them that college is about discovering your identity while being away from the familiarity of family and the surroundings of home. Finding your identity prepares you for life and helps you figure out what you want to do and how you want to do it (Anonymous, personal communication, October 27, 2014). Some participants felt that success in college was defined by the impact they had on others. One participant explains,

...I base success in college on the impact that I had on the people I was working with. So if I was able to make somebody else's day better or I was able to help somebody do something while I was able to impact my community, that was success to me. So things simply like with my fraternity, stuff like that, we did something, somebody was impacted or somebody was helped or somebody gained knowledge or understanding of something that they didn't know before, that was success to me. I wasn't looking at the complete end product, I was looking more at the process to get to the end of the product. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 23, 2014)

Another common theme in the way success was defined was in relation to managing time and balancing responsibilities. All of the participants in this group discussed how they were very involved in co-curricular experiences outside the classroom. These experiences

included student organizations, on-campus employment, university committees, and events sponsored by university departments. Other experiences consisted of off-campus employment, and other off-campus activities. One participant stated,

I also thought success was defined by in school by, you know I definitely wanted to have the impact on the campus that I attended, so for me I got involved in a lot of what you call extra-curricular activity and then I also think to be successful in school or what I define as success is school is learning how to be independent, so you know learning how not to lean on your mother or your parents and your financial responsibilities, I think in school you have to, you need to learn how to budget money, how to be responsible, how to manage your time and things like that. I think that those are my definitions for success or how you can be successful in school. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 16, 2014)

The responses from students in this group revealed that there was a shared belief that time management, being a well-rounded student, and becoming involved in activities outside of class was how they defined college success. Moreover, the Rites of Passage program offered experiences outside of class that focused on skill development and education in the areas of academic achievement, time management, career development, financial management, personal branding, civic engagement, and leadership development.

As I interviewed past program participants who did not graduate in four years, I found evidence that success was more broadly defined. Some descriptions included graduating and getting a job as one participant states, “I guess during college my idea of success was graduating and getting my first job like upon graduation” (Anonymous, personal communication, September 17, 2014). Another description included getting good grades, co-curricular involvement, and developing networking relationships with students and professors. One individual explained, “Success in college, getting the grades

that required for me to stay in college...being involved in, participating in different activities and to be successful, sort of, you have the balance of networking...with peers, professors, and so it is broadly” (Anonymous, personal communication, September 29, 2014). Another person explained,

It was important for me to not only change my life, but also change my peers lives around me by whatever means whether I would just lean on their shoulders for them to talk to or to support them financially or however I could I just wanted to help people and vice versa people helped me along the way, so I really felt like that’s what they need success for in college. (Anonymous, personal communication, October 1, 2014).

Moreover, there was a consensus among these former students that success was defined by degree completion, co-curricular involvement, and building a network of students, faculty, and other individuals. Similarly, one of the functions of Rites of Passage was to be a network of support consisting of students, faculty, staff, and curricular and co-curricular experiences. This network of support was also designed to motivate positive progress toward degree completion.

The above section addressed the first research question for this case study *How was success defined among African American male undergraduate students enrolled at a PWI during the 2009-2013 academic years?* The next section will address the second research question for this case study *During this time frame, what did African American male undergraduate students articulate as the factors that contributed to their success at a PWI?*

Success, Identity, and Community Support

When I asked the past program participants that graduated in four years about the factors that contributed to their success, they discussed how developing their personal identity, building a community of support, and time management were valuable tools in helping them develop a strong determination to complete their degree requirements in four years. One person stated,

I think me having a job while I was in school helped me prioritize. So I think having a job helped me. I think being involved in extracurricular activities allowed me to be successful. I think support from my girlfriend I was with my girlfriend at the time or at least basically for three years while I was in school – and she was supportive. Also I'd say my parents and family were the support system while I was in school (Anonymous, personal communication, September 16, 2014).

Another participant explained,

I definitely think programs like the Rites of Passage program I'm not like to saying that because I'm talking to you – I think that definitely helped, because I think being with other like-minded individuals, you know that was a key I think you know, you're saying that you're not the only one that's concerned about these issues, essentially not the only one trying to do better for yourself, I feel like that definitely helped, helped you know to motivate me, but also being able to help instill that energy or that positivity in somebody else who might have been in your shoes or who might be in your shoes down the road, because I was you know with the mentoring, I was senior and they were freshmen, um but I think I also I guess I had a drive that I didn't want to be like another,

He went on to say,

I didn't want to be average you know, I wasn't like the most well-spoken person or the most intellectual or philosophical or rich person, but I think I definitely worked harder than most, so I guess my drive really kind of helped me, I mean I was – one day when I was at school I'd go to class have meeting, go to class, have

another meeting, go to class, mentor, go to class, go to work, have another meeting, have a conference call, that was my day, so I guess my work ethic was kind of um, high, not always in the right places. It was often that I focused more on my other stuff than I did on my school work, but um I started making you know my work ethic kind of definitely helped out too. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 15, 2014)

Another individual explained,

So what made me successful was the fact that I did have communities of different cultures and I was able to take from them and apply to who I was and apply to things that I was taught, but also had a great support system from family, from my fraternity and also from Rites of Passage. Rites of Passage was one of the greatest things about being at PRU because not only was able to be mentored, but I was able to mentor. like I was able to get information, find resources of other African American and minority people in the community and in the school system, that were able to connect me with other things that I needed to learn so that I can help the next generation that would come after me.

He continued,

So definitely Rites of Passage, my fraternity, my family, my friends in just having outlets to other cultures were definitely a part of my success. And I would also say that there are lot of professors that make sure that I still don't ask because they believed me and I think that is the biggest thing when you go to college sometimes you don't get that because it is such a bigger community of people and professors are seeing hundreds and thousands of students each day, and they don't have the time to really stick to you work about if you are getting there okay but luckily I had some professors and Deans, I had some who just cared about my welfare and the things that I did in my success in me being able to go forward and help other people. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 15, 2014).

The members of this group shared in their belief that the factors that contributed to their success at a PWI focused on the ability to develop and recognize personal identity, build a community of support, and manage priorities. Many of them suggested that Rites of

Passage had a positive impact on their success because it offered them exposure to each of these factors that contributed to their success.

When I asked the past program participants who did not graduate in four years about the factors that contributed to their success, some discussion centered around how professors, academic advisors, and tutoring services were valuable resources in working toward success. One individual explained,

I know when I got into my major, like once I got to my major, I started major, I got an advisor. Like an advisor was like a partner, and I found that that helped a whole lot. Because I really liked to cover what my eventual career track was, and what I wanted to do at some point. And basic kind of guide me more towards the classes that I should take within my major...Just like every teacher who was teaching a course that actually offered any kind of services, they kind of would say like, "Go here", and I don't really remember what the program was called but they'd say like "This department is offering tutoring for this specific section." And I may have like two or three tutors for this amount of time. Chemistry is... specifically, they offer what's called Supplemental Instruction, an instruction program. And it's pretty helpful. I mean, the hours on it, they're kind of morphing. I guess they're trying to fit in tutor's schedule and a lot of times they never fit in with mine. But I mean that comes down to the whole school, work life complications thing. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 17, 2014)

Another person explained,

I appreciate the teacher-student relationship. So all of the teachers who actually, you know teach, and not just instructing you. Like, I like people who are passionate about their craft and what they're teaching, so I like being around people like that and it has affect me because I want to be a teacher. So seeing people who actually are teachers, and seeing how they operate is kind of like seeing yourself in the future, you know...Not only people who were teachers, but different administrators on campus, like people like you or others working with the Rites of Passage. Being able to talk to like older people who have already been through kind of what we are going through and they can give you insight on how to make it through your situation. I think that's priceless. (Anonymous, personal communication, November 3, 2014)

One participant stated,

I think – I think whether I have to talk to more guys would’ve maybe like a year or two out of college, and so they have the – just share more of their experiences with me, uh because my Rites of Passage that was really helpful, but like those guys were still in a school, so it’s like some of the stuff, they are still going through so they can’t necessarily may be give me the best advice, but that did help I think just going up a little bit in the age that the experience that could help more too. They have a good – they had good tutor in the center, I was – everything else was pretty good. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 18, 2014)

Another participant discussed,

I guess it was after doing a lot of like different programs, and people kind of drilling into my head. And I guess for whatever reason, I chose to like blow it off, I don’t need those types of things. But they helped and I guess in their own way. Whether it was this, I felt like for me it was just like having someone question me about “Okay, well what are your study habits?” It was like helped a lot for me, and like I didn’t necessarily need somebody to teach me materials, because I can usually pick it up relatively easily. But it’s just a matter of like somebody actually questioned me like, “Well, what do you do to actually study”? And then I think about it, it’s like really I just, most of the time, I won’t even look over my notes, I’ll just do homework and expect for that to fill in all the blanks, and all the little things that I don’t really get. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 17, 2014)

Another theme that surfaced was that there was a drive toward success that was motivated by a desire to dispel stereotypes about Black males in college. One participant responded, “I wanted to show everybody that I wasn’t a gang banger athlete, because I really can, because I was smart, and so I just wanted to prove people wrong, so I made it like a point to be smart and talk in my classes and just show myself, that was my biggest motivation” (Anonymous, personal communication, September 18, 2014). Further conversation highlighted strong family influence as a former student stated,

What helped me to be successful in college, my parents and grandparents and my friends motivated me, stayed on my back well I believe it was my sophomore year I had a conversation with my mother, called her and had this conversation because I was considering like I don't want to be in college anymore or way to get out, go home to do something else and she told me that she give me five years to do this and once I got out I was going to be on my own leg. While I was in college you know, all of this was new for me because I needed someone back home to call and ask my parents questions.

He went on to say,

But once I got out for breaks, I liked to come home because I actually liked how my home feels. Then the reality set in that she actually gave me like six months to try to do it on my own, but it was difficult because I didn't have a job before this and need something to pay stuff. So I didn't want to be like I was way too independent while in college and maybe wanted to stay in tried a little more in taking school more seriously because if I had dropped out, it would have just been me against the world, so motivation and my family really helped me stay and get the job done and want to be successful. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 29, 2014)

The participants in this group suggested that the utilization of academic resources such as professors, academic advisors, and tutoring services were the factors that contributed to their success at a PWI. Relatedly, Rites of Passage introduced students to these resources through educational workshops and its minority male mentoring learning community.

The above section addressed the second sub-research question for this case study *During this time frame, what did African American male undergraduate students articulate as the factors that contributed to their success at a PWI?* The next section will address the third sub-research question for this case study *What did African American male undergraduate students experience as challenges and barriers to success at PWIs?*

Financial Challenges as Barriers to Success

When I asked the participants in this study that graduated in four years about challenges they experienced as barriers to success, many discussed how financial demands were significant challenges for those of them who did not have strong financial support from their family. One individual shared how financial challenges he faced were the result of him spending money to create an image of himself that would dispel the societal depiction of a poor Black male.

I feel like you know I was poor, my family is poor, so you know definitely people like me think about, I won't say poverty, when you think about poor African-American men are less fortunate African-American men financially, we think of like some, this is a stereotype, this is a Black guy. You're going to think some uneducated hood guy with saggy pants etc, etc which I'm none of that, so it's kind of a shock for most people who met me, but I think ah, I think it goes back to my whole point like I said before my biggest um, when I talked about the money situation I try to look for ways that overcompensate by getting those big refund checks, you know trying to live this extravagant lifestyle that I couldn't keep up with to make it seem like I had more than I really did when in actuality I was very poor, I am very poor now. I guess it was a challenge of trying to make people think I was not from that socio-economic background, I really was. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 15, 2014)

Another participant discussed how the financial expenses associated with his major made it difficult for him have everything he needed to successfully complete his course requirements.

I had to pay for a lot of stuff as a music major. I had to pay for my compositions when it came to lessons. Umm, I had to pay for all of my music books. So not, or I didn't have enough money to afford the books I needed for my classes or if I did finally get the money, it would be two weeks late. So that part, socioeconomic status, me not being wealthy or not having enough or the means to, definitely delayed some of my studying, delayed some of me, you know, practicing. So I wasn't as prepared, you know, for my voice lessons, I didn't get my voice books

in time. Or I missed a quiz, I wasn't prepared for a quiz because I didn't have the book in time to prepare for a particular chapter. (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2014)

Alternatively, one person explained that his socioeconomic status helped him have an easier college experience.

I have always kind of been well off, so I definitely never struggled in the aspect of you know, having enough money to eat or dressing well, I had school supplies, so I definitely think that um the way I was brighter in my economic class was very beneficial, because I do know some people that couldn't buy books and you know couldn't have – they couldn't afford to always have the school supplies ready, so um I know being – especially my Spanish class it was a modified Spanish class, but I know some people that were in there and they would have to share books and they would have to share resources. So I definitely think that you know my parent's jobs, even the jobs that I had when I was an undergrad definitely helped, because I was able to do kind of what I wanted to do um, and not really have to worry about it as much as other people might have. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 19, 2014)

In essence, financial demands were a significant challenge especially for individuals who did not have strong financial support from their family. It also seemed as if some participants found it challenging to exercise wisdom when spending refund checks they received each semester for unused student loan money.

In an effort to address this barrier, Rites of Passage offered workshops that focused on managing finances. One of the research participants who graduated in four years explained how he found these workshops to be helpful. He said,

I think I learnt a lot like I said you know from Rites of Passage program you know financial literacy I mean, because I had issues managing money, but I'll go to the financial literacy programs and I learn how to manage it better, resume writing or you know....(Anonymous, personal communication, September 15, 2014)

It appears that Rites of Passage was considered to be a valuable tool in helping students develop good life management skills including money management, and personal branding.

These participants also discussed how they viewed Rites of Passage as a support service that helped them overcome the challenges they faced in college. One individual stated, “I definitely think Rites of Passage like I said um, because through that and through the fraternity and through just doing stuff on campus I was made aware of all the different people on campus, all the support of campus” (Anonymous, personal communication, September 15, 2014). Another person explained,

I would definitely say Rites of Passage is one [support service]. Umm, just being able to be around other Black men who were very well educated, and very well versed in their opinions and how they felt about certain things, and they could clearly articulate it and express it, and it made me feel, you know, comfortable expressing it and not feel ashamed of expressing myself or speaking to other people about certain things that I felt. So those were definitely avenues that helped me. (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2014)

Both men suggest that Rites of Passage was one of the organizations that introduced them to people and services that were resources of support for them.

When I asked the participants in this study that did not graduate in four years about challenges they experienced as barriers to success, many also discussed how financial demands were significant challenges for those of them who did not have strong financial support from their family. One individual talked about how his mother’s income bracket did not allow him to receive enough financial aid to comfortably pay for school.

I guess due to my mom's income on paper it really affected my financial aid pretty heavily, and that covers like more financial aid issues we're dealing with. My mom makes pretty decent money when you look at it on paper. But a lot of things that I guess financial aid and things that they don't really take into consideration is... Like if you're helping other family members or if you're the key financial structure for... like more than just one technical household. She like it was never really like the only persons she was supporting was just our household. She would help her sisters and her brothers also, and my grandmother, she regularly helped her. But you know, she never really expected anybody to like "Oh, let me claim your dependent" or something crazy like that. Because it's just family, kind of like the mentality you're just like family helping family, you know.

He continued to explain,

So I guess in their calculators or whatever, that they do to decide how much financial aid gets disbursed to people. I guess while they were looking at it they would see, oh, well this is just a household with a few people making x amount of dollars this is actually nothing for them to pay. But there's always a kind of a back end to that also. So and honestly, looking back on it, you can't... I can't consider myself like a special case. I'm pretty sure that happens all the way across the board. And you can't... they can't do like special treatments for every single person out there, like because then if you have all of these people claiming that, "Oh, I give this person such and such amount a month", then everybody ends up doing it, and you end up with an unbalanced system anyway. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 17, 2014)

Another person discussed how socioeconomic status created social barriers for the kinds of peers he could develop relationships with.

I would say financial background [had an impact on who you were able to socialize with] just as far as like there might be another kid who came from the house that their parents made like \$200,000 dollars and my house we make like \$50,000 dollars, I'm not going to have some of the experience that \$200,000 dollar kid is going to have and they are not going to have some of the experiences I have, so because we don't have those same experiences there is going to be certain places where we are not going to see eye to eye or see – I'm not going to understand your perspective, because I've never had that experience and vice-versa. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 18, 2014)

One participant discussed how financial challenges created limitations on how much money he could spend on books and other living necessities. He shared that he often mismanaged his refund check and sometimes he could not afford to eat and pay rent.

I always had materials, I always had my books. Now I necessarily bought a book, it may not have happened, or if I got a book, I was able to find the cheapest way I could. Because I couldn't afford the books in the bookstore so I'm going to go to websites to try to find a book. I know when it came to like internal there will be a lot of times I'll come out of pocket for things. So I had to go without something. Living then... also living on campus, you got to worry about okay, where am I eating today? Am I going to be able to get into the cafeteria? If not, I'm going to have to go pick something up or go buy groceries. So you're going to have to manage, okay, buying this...can't buy all this. And my friends share off campus, I was like I had to get a refund check, so a refund check I would save it, so my rent it was paid up. So I'd go buy this, that and whatnot but it didn't go into my...

He went on to discuss,

Then next year, I was like oh, I can't do this, I got a little crazy. And then especially going into my last year, the funds get shorter and shorter. So then you like dang, I wish I had did this or like having car issues. You have the extra money for car, but then the problem still wasn't fixed, you in the hole. So you try to bum rides to here and there, or try to get this and then worry about how am I going to get to my internship, I can't... I don't have a means of transportation. So then that kind of came to be an issue. But things worked out, people allowed me to use a vehicle here and there, and then get into something that did get me to and from. That was helpful... The only thing was the groceries, things like that. But I was having to manage because I had plenty from like my refund check.

He continued,

So like I said, it was easier going into it, then like I say when school's out, you can't go to the cafs because, I mean I'm not on campus. So it was like, man what am I going to do here. The days when I was on campus still live on campus you can still eat on campus, because I still lived there. So that was a plus. But like inside school is more efficient, but like the outside school is where it like it became crunch time. Because there's nothing going on and it's the summer, so

what are you going to do? That is when oh man, I wished I had a job so that way I have some kind of means of income, still do X, Y, Z, some kind of refund check coming. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 25, 2014)

Another participant expressed how he wrestled with deciding between taking a full-time course load and working extra hours to support his family.

It was tough, I always had to make a tough decision whether to take a full load of classes or to take the bare minimum they enrolled in order to provide for me and my family and as a man, you know you never wanted your family to go without anything, you know so that was – it was heartbreaking at times, you know because you I was young at the time I was like 21, 22, but yet I had such a load on my back, and it was really challenging, it was – it made me stronger though, because I was able to prioritize, it taught me to really appreciate the small things in life and to appreciate God and because he is not going to put something in front of you that you can't handle so, it made me a better person, it made me a man, it really did. I am still in the process of completing my degree now. I had to take timeout, because of those challenges I had to take timeout and really prioritize our education is still important to me and I am still learning now, I am just doing it through the navy. (Anonymous, personal communication, October 1, 2014)

With this group of participants, there was a need to work to financially make ends meet and support leisure expenses. Some of their parents were not able to financially support them in college due to financial difficulties at home. This created added stress for individuals who were trying to get money to have transportation to get to school and jobs off campus. The consensus among this group was that there was a priority to take care of physical needs before intellectual needs. Moreover the mission of the Rites of Passage program included a focus on life management to equip students with the skills to handle these kinds of challenges so they would not become a barrier to their success.

Racial Challenges as Barriers to Success

The group of individuals who graduated in four years discussed how they perceived race to be tied to some of the challenges they faced at PRU. One person described how he had to overcome the societal stereotypes of a Black male while he was in college although many of his friends played into them. He explains,

The first challenge I faced was surrounding myself with the right people. When I first went to school I got involved with the wrong crowd and that kind of took me off the track, because they were involved in some like illegal thing that I didn't want to be involved with. So the biggest challenge for me was separating myself from that and when you grow to that I guess you kind of feel like sometimes you become disillusioned because you think well maybe I am not maybe I am scared to do this, this and this you know this whole play into like negative stereotypes as a black man so that was one of the biggest challenges I faced when I was in school...

He continued,

I think sometimes as a black man and even as a college student you feel this societal pressure to play into negative stereotypes of black men, what I mean by that is you don't want and this may sound let's say, well like on the T.V you know in the media, you know in Blue music you see black men playing this role like they might be drug dealers or they might be whatever I don't know playboy you know who just goes around and things like that and I think even like college student like black men that are college students I think we still face pressure to play into those roles. So I think some of my friends that were in school with me, played into those roles and got involved in certain things that I almost felt like I needed to get involved with so that's when you disillusioned it's like that's when you start having the conflict about like wait a minute, this isn't me. I need to stay away from this. So that's when you have that challenge of breaking away from the pressure of playing into these roles and doing what everybody else was doing or doing what you think everybody else was doing at time so I definitely think that challenge was associated with my race. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 16, 2014)

Another individual described how the diversity at PRU was so overwhelming for him that he found it challenging to find a group that he could fit in with.

The big thing about PRU was it was the most diverse campus in the SUS right, which was I mean that was cool. Well I think that I remember a point where I was like man you know what I don't like it here and everybody is like talking about all this diversity, but I'm not capitalizing on it. It wasn't really about anybody's fault, but my own, but it's like you know being talking about diversity, diversity but how do you – I felt like they didn't really do much to help bring diversity together.

He went on to explain,

Because I go out in front of the Cafe and I'll see all the black guys standing together. I see the black skater guys hanging together, all the black frat guys hanging together, all the white sorority girls hanging together, all the Asian guys hanging together, all the Hispanic guys hanging together, all the Hispanic, you know what I'm saying, so it wasn't really um, a lot of diversity I think me being aware of my race, I mean I don't like, I guess I don't like to you know make it as like this happened, because I'm black but I'm always aware in situations like I'm the only black guy here, you know so I think they kind of made it difficult for me to branch out a little bit, so I think that the diversity was a challenge for me. I didn't know how to handle that, well I didn't really know what sense to take to kind of fit in. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 15, 2014)

One participant was in agreement with the previous point of view that you had to take the initiative to find a group to fit in, although he believes you had to develop your own cultural experience and represent the Black community at times.

I definitely think being, well, I will say that PRU was a very um, – it was very; it was very diverse depending on the groups that you work in. Um so do I feel like I was accepted as a black person on campus, I did, but I felt like, I felt like you kind of had to put in yourself out there to make sure that you were known. Um but I felt like, I don't feel like PRU was very hostile place towards African-Americans, um yes I think, you had to work and put in the work to survive and to um, accomplish things, but as long as you're motivated and did what had to do, um I

felt like you were pretty good. Um, as far as like classmates and stuff, and students and things, um I mean, yeah, there were a few times where some things might have been said and everyone kind of looked for your opinion. Yeah, like um, there was often times where I was one of, maybe two or three African-Americans in an entire classroom, and um, this might have been like sciences classes or things like that.

He went on to say,

So of course certain things were explained such as like a race theory or involvement of people and things like that, um you know a lot of times, it would be – students like I said would just kind of think that you would react a certain way to certain things, um and it also like, it was really strange to me – not strange, because I guess I was kind of used to it, because in high school I was one of the only one or two black people in class, um but when I got my college, I guess I just expected it to be more. Um but during the types of classes I was taking outside of African-American studies, of course those classes were predominantly black people in them. So I guess in my other classes, that's where I ran into me being the only one of the two black people in class and your just kind of like, oh I'm going to sit over here next to you, because you know, you understand and we're going to be cool, we're going to make it through together. Um, so I mean, that's kind of how I felt about my race on campus. Um, It was definitely – I mean, some things were definitely a culture shock, um people just running around, people running around with no shoes on, people just saying what they want to – anything they want to say, how they want to say, um the way certain people, I guess, dressed and carry themselves were very different in what I was used to as a black person.

He continued,

I just felt like some white people on campus just got away with whatever they wanted to do and um white people would kind of just dress in their own expressive manner um, and sometimes you know you would just notice that certain groups of white people were just be you know loud in like public places or um especially when they um started doing the – what was that game, that Humans Vs Zombies game, yeah, I mean, I understand something like African-Americans were involved, but it was mostly white people and I just feel like, if there were so much of black people around with Nerf guns and popping out of bushes, it would have been a – it would've been shut down a longtime ago. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 19, 2014)

Another member of this group discussed how he came to college wall up between himself and White people because of how was treated by peers prior to PRU. He stated,

Honestly, I think that maybe the only thing that might have been a challenge toward my race was when I first came in and I said I was trying to find myself. I know that when I was in middle school and high school, I was often teased a lot because I was too proper so I was considered White. And that used to really bother me when I would hear, “Oh you not Black, you not this, you not that.” So when I got to PRU, it’s almost like I had somewhat of a wall built up towards White people. So I did not really want to hang out with White people. So it was like “Okay, I’m establishing myself. I’m in this new territory, I’m only hanging out with Black people.” Umm, and honestly, that’s what I did for quite some time. In the School of Music, I really wasn’t trying to make to make friends with the people inside the School of Music, inside my major. It was “I need to make friends outside of my department.” (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2014)

One participant explained how most of his racial challenges occurred through experiences he had within his academic department that his major was housed in.

Yeah that was the biggest thing I think it was more so race and really I wouldn’t say that it was the entire school, I think it was maybe just my department because PRU luckily is a very diverse school, and I think that it’s, they are able to open up and exemplify all types of cultures. I am sighting just for in my department the fact that I was African American that was intimidating for them because of the fact that I was not just here to just for show, but I could actually act and I could actually sing and I could get along with everybody else just as if I was Caucasian or any other race. So I think that race was the, that is the connection, that was relationship for me and my department is the fact that I was African American and that was the connection and so my challenge was simply my race, it wasn’t my talent, it wasn’t my attitude, it wasn’t my working in shape or my ability to do work, it was the fact simply because I was African American. It was harder for me to get roles or do the things I needed to do in that department. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 23, 2014)

Each past program participant who graduated in four years had challenges associated with race to overcome in order to be successful at PRU. In some instances

these challenges surfaced in the classroom or in an environment connected to their academic major. For others, they were tied to socially adjusting to the campus climate. In some instances, these experiences also suggest that there was a relationship between racial challenges and individual identity development. Moreover, one of the goals of Rites of Passage was to create a community of support for African American males where they could be equipped to successfully overcome racial challenges through educational activities. As the program expanded into a learning community, students were introduced to a greater number of experiences to help them socially adjust to the campus environment.

When asked how the university could address these challenges, participants suggested offering programs that create an environment of support for minority populations, such as Rites of Passage. One participant stated,

I really think you need more things to that do kind of target specific groups, because we do that you know target the black men on campus, target black women on campus, target under achieving groups as soon as – because you’ve to kind of if you want them to go out to the greater University, community I think you’ve to make them comfortable within themselves and kind of let them know they have support from somebody and easier to support you can get is by from someone that looks like you, you know so I would say do more stuff like that, more stuff like Rites of Passage, more stuff like that...

This participant went on to say,

Rites of Passage is one that really long-lasting, because these other programs like Man Creating Change and there’s another one I can’t think about what it is called, they just came and gone um, something almost has it to be something that the University sponsors, because I don’t know why it is just so hard to get black men to commit to stuff, and I feel like the University has the funds to do it, they’ve the space to keep it going, they had the resources to make it attractive, you know as

far as they have speakers and what not, so I would say definitely do stuff, more stuff like Rites of Passage, because through that they kind of learn the skills to go out and better the University as a whole. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 15, 2014)

It appears that participants feel that Rites of Passage contributed to their success in college by creating an environment to overcome challenges related to race that they experienced as barriers to success.

When I asked the participants in this study that did not graduate in four years about challenges related to race they experienced as barriers to success, they discussed how they perceived these barriers were associated with them being stereotyped as the poor, low achieving. One participant discussed how he internalized negative racial interactions to be the result of stereotypes.

I guess I was kind of self-conscious, I guess because I went to PRU. I had never really been in an environment with that many white people before. I used to have longhair and everything so people – I was that stereotypical guy, so it made me kind of like angry for real, because in some situations they might not have anything to do with now somebody could be having a bad day, but I would take it as racial or whatever so that was something about that is, um difficult and then down to just like – I guess people you are on an athletic scholarship if you go to school or you go to NC A&T. That's the first thing they say of course I tell them I go to PRU and play on the basketball team or whatever. Um and then I guess learning how to interact with white people that was kind of challenging, because I've just – I've never done it before. I was – I already had the mind state but they're looking at a certain kind of way, so I guess and I've probably been – I was approaching them with the predisposition. So, you know it didn't go as smoothly as maybe it should have but that was just as challenging for me. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 18, 2014)

Another individual shared how he struggled with Stereotype Threat in his courses as he did not feel comfortable asking for help or participating in class discussions at times.

I'll say going and say if you're the only black person in your class, you're kind of... you always keep to yourself. You might try to ask a question to somebody beside you, but other than that, I mean you kind of feel like an outcast. Like you're not outcast but you kind of feel like you're by yourself because you're the only one, and there's no one there to really relate to what you're going through. So I mean, that's always been a thing going into classes a lot of people do [as a] history [major]. For a black person to be doing history there's not a lot of us so you're going to always be kind of like the only one or two in the class. I mean it didn't really bother me, but I'd go into it like, oh yeah, it's going to be another class like this.... The rest of them, I might be the only one of two, but the class was interesting enough that you wouldn't mind asking a question or trying to get some help or something, because the class was giving enough. But the other one was just boring, but like my education courses, I was like the only black one and this other guy, but we all was in the same major fields. So we all tried to talk about certain things, try to get...make a certain connection. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 25, 2014)

Another participant described how the way Black males were negatively stereotyped on campus had an inverse effect on his motivation to succeed in college.

I believe these challenges to my race, let me see, well going as a minority male, you are already expected to go to college and it's more of a high risk making so you ask for me finishing the process, so people who already have you set up will have the expectation that you are going to go, you are going to fail, or you are going to get some girlfriend, something of that nature, and you will be like I guess another statistic, like other black male dropout, or something like that. So you the – the thing for a cool person, oh yeah I went to college, I want to use it for a year, yeah it was the year four, like you can print on your resume, where you didn't finish so just I'm here partying, having fun, so now I'm back home, now like I wish I could change the experience. So the challenge of being African-American is that you already have your challenges because of stereotypes. Most black men don't go to college, one. Two, that they are not taking it seriously so most of the blacks become college dropouts or give you some type of trouble while they are there. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 29, 2014)

One person discussed how the way Black males were stereotyped on campus was influential in the way his professors treated him as a second-class citizen.

Even when I was in college, when I was taking classes some of the professors they would actually see me as a second class citizen. I don't think they actually meant to do that they perceive the way that I dress, that I wasn't there to learn, you know I was like almost forced to be there and that wasn't the case, and I feel like that was it is very interesting to me like very interesting. I tried to find a program PRU where students would help raise money for other students in the health sciences, because I was a public health major and I was greatly out represented, well underrepresented, my apologies. There will be like let's say 50 people in the class and there will be like five different ethnicities, you know and that's including black people and I felt like the way the school is setup or the way most colleges are setup it doesn't allow people to necessarily work a full-time job and go to school as well and I felt like most ethnicities other than white maybe they did have to work as well, but from my experience they didn't it's like their parents were paying for their schooling, so they were able to dedicate more time to their studies as far as me and some other peers who had to like leave class and then we'll leave class once it was over and go straight to work.

He went on to explain,

Work your shift and then come home and try to commit to your studies and then get up the next morning and do it all over again, and after a while it takes a toll on you, you know you're not able to dedicate the time that other people are able to do and I feel like as far as race that was the biggest thing ever like, it wasn't that they would talk down to me or anything, but the way – they didn't seem to understand like hey. I need you to give me a layout of exactly how this paper is going to be written or how you want this paper to be written they just want you to do the work and they don't want to put in the extra time to help you grasp information they felt like it was your obligation to teach yourself. It's their obligation just to give you the information, you know where I honestly felt like I am here to learn so teach me, you know as far as race is that is one thing I had to swallow my pride on and put forth extra effort to try to make ends meet as far as school and as far as financially. (Anonymous, personal communication, October 1, 2014)

The consensus among participants in this group was that many experiences seemed racial but may have been intimidating by the fact that they were the only Black person or one of a few in a class. There was a perception that professors would not take into consideration the circumstances they were facing outside of class that was affecting their ability to

succeed. Many felt as if they were not viewed as regular students, like their White peers, but more so as students who were not going to succeed academically. In an effort to address this issue, the Rites of Passage Program included group coaching sessions facilitated by African American male university faculty and staff. These sessions presented the opportunity for students to have candid conversations with university faculty and staff to reinforce their sense of belonging with the institution and develop mentoring experiences.

Gender Challenges as Barriers to Success

When I asked the participants in this study that graduated in four years about challenges related to gender they experienced as barriers to success, they discussed the significant role gender played in defining their individual identity according to societal norms. One participant shared how there was societal pressure for him to conform to a certain image of man in order to avoid being viewed as weak. He stated,

The challenge of isolation I think relate to my gender too because I think we faced pressure, societal pressure is being able to hold your own you know be independent, not ask anyone for help. So if I maintained that mentality like its okay for me I am going to suck this up I might not seek out resources that may help me so that still enough isolation can definitely be a challenge and I might not get any help because if I seek out any help I may feel like I am less of man because I am requiring that help being dependent and as a man I am supposed to be independent or that's what society said. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 16, 2014)

One person explained how he had combat the stereotype that as a Black male, he was not serious about his education and would not graduate. He shared,

I'm sure you probably know better than I do about how many black males are at PRU and how many of them actually graduated, things like that, but I think at sometimes it's true people say, you know as a black man in a predominantly white institution you're kind of like a threat, so I kind of associate them with the police there, police there I guess often target us sometimes, but I think, because being a black man I mean, if only like just a random number,

He went on to say,

If only 2% of you guys graduate they kind of look at you like you're just going to be here for a semester, you can be out here party, you don't do any work, you're not serious, you know, you're not going to graduate, you're just here to have a good time, and make some poor grades, you know it was really challenge and an opportunity to prove people wrong, to say hey, you know some of us black guys are straight up, we're in a community, we're being involved, we're excellent, we're trying to be professionals, we're trying to make a better life for ourselves not just come here to party and drink, and get high in the weekend, so I guess you were saying, I guess the negative stereotypes around black men on the campus definitely came into play, so it's a pretty a challenge of overcoming those negative stereotypes. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 15, 2014)

Another individual discussed how he defied the gender stereotype of the Black male by creating a different outward appearance in his dress and involvement on campus.

So I always just made sure that when I was on campus I was dressed very well, I felt like I was always you know polite, um and I was always putting myself in leadership roles and positions that I can be influential, while these individual may have dressed more urban um, and may have, you know just kind of did what they wanted to do, they might not have been as respectful, um but that was just based on perception, because I mean, I knew these people and I knew that they were good people, but to the outside person looking in, they were just the stereotypical in the media, African-American person um, that may or may not have been in the classroom um, all the time and when they were there they may not been paying attention or you know doing what they had to do to even pass the class, um so that's what I mean by, I carried myself in a way that I was going to demand respect whether you didn't like a black male or not you're going to like me or even if you didn't like me, – I guess I didn't let it bother me, because I knew what

I wanted to do and what I wanted to get out of my college experience.
(Anonymous, personal communication, September 19, 2014)

Another participant talked about how he was faced the challenge of being viewed as the stereotypical Black male, portrayed through social media, by individuals in his academic department.

Yeah definitely me being a black man in itself is taboo in a sense because we are perceived as threatening and we are perceived as uncontrollable and stubborn and intolerant. So all these things that were categorized as and then coming into an environment where you want to be respected but you also want to be appreciative and understandable of other cultures and other races, that is a difficult thing to do, because you are coming into a setting where you are looked as a minority, you are not accepted 100% you are accepted probably about maybe 50-60% and so coming in to that as a black person one, and coming into as a black male who is also perceived so vigorously despicable on social media and on TV and all that was another challenge to add on to that fact that not only was I black but I was a black man.

He continued,

And most people unfortunately in our society, a lot of black men are seen as quitters and dead-beats and drug addicts and drug dealers, so for me to come in with things on my resume, to come in with success and come in with hard work and dedication, that is something that people are not usually expecting. So that definitely added to the challenge because I was very particular about how I handle my business and how I ended as an African American male. In life we are not expected that nor were they really as open to that because they thought that I was trying to be superior to them in first as being inferior. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 23, 2014)

One person shared how his gender challenges were related to him developing his individual identity as a gay male and finding social circles to connect with.

I identify as gay. But when I first came to college, I knew that, but I was still afraid to tell that, and let anybody know. So like generally, I'm more comfortable socially, well then I was, more comfortably socially with females. So I guess to prove this sense of, "I'm not gay, I don't like guys and I can be one of the guys," I would hang out with guys who I thought were cool who lived in my residence hall who I did not necessarily have any connection with, but just because I was trying to fit in, I would hang out with them and it was uncomfortable...I knew I did not want to hang out with them and I feel like I was hanging out to them just to prove something. And that wasn't who I really wanted to hang out with. So gender-wise, and I guess sexuality-wise too, influenced how I should be and how I should act as a male. That really influenced who I should hang out with. And eventually it changed because I knew it wasn't what was up, it wasn't something that was making me happy. (Anonymous, personal communication, October 3, 2014)

Moreover, participants described how gender challenges were related to socially constructed definitions of masculinity and male identity for African American males. These constructs created an image and educational limitations for African American males. Similar to race, gender was intertwined in personal identity development for each participant. A notable similarity among each of these individuals is that they all had a determination to use their college experience as a tool to dispel the stereotypes of the Black male, being pigeonholed in this category, and overcoming the gender challenges associated with this social construct.

It is the case that Rites of Passage helped many of these men overcome challenges associated with their gender and be successful in college. One individual explained,

I feel like I had all the support systems that I needed to face my challenges. Definitely like again Rites of Passage was one of the biggest things because of the fact they connected me with other African American professors and teachers and leaders that would impact college community so I feel like I had the resources and I felt like I utilized them also being same gender loving, there was a leniency for that. So that if I needed to talk to somebody about issues I was having or if there was some disagreement going on that involved my sexuality, I was able to have a resource for that and I feel like I didn't really, I had the sources that I needed, I

didn't feel like I didn't have any sources, I think for most people it is matter of if you utilize the sources that are given to you and I feel like I did. So I felt like I had the sources that I needed to help me through my challenges. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 23, 2014)

Participants in this group, expressed how Rites of Passage was important to their success because it created a community of support for barriers related to gender they were facing.

When I asked the participants in this study that did not graduate in four years about challenges related to gender they experienced as barriers to success, some shared that their challenges in this area, similar to racial challenges, were reflective of depiction of the stereotypical Black male illustrated through media and pop culture. One participant discussed that he was perceived in a negative way as a stereotypical Black male.

My gender. Uh, you know – I guess just like my gender being stereotype I know if it's gender or something that was really important always, but it was more of my race than my gender, you know, I'm sure it did play a role where I felt like race is the bigger issue, but gender, I guess there's people thinking about the stereotypical black male as someone who was going to start some trouble. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 18, 2014)

Another participant shared how he felt alone when it came to motivating himself and finding support because of the lack of Black male college graduates he was able to find as role models.

The relationship I believe these challenges had to my gender, getting ourselves, they are not going to support you as a black man in America, so make it, you see more women graduated from college, more and more as opposed to the African-American community. So it is a challenge for you to graduate, it is going to be a little difficult because we don't -- we certain times don't have the right power to stay in the race and get the job done because we get discouraged because sometimes we all feel, this is what I feel, no one is supporting us or no one has your back, you're by yourself in the race, I don't know, but your family dynamic

adds to it... like who supports you from your family or your motivators in your family to help you stay strong and keep your stage enduring, go through the whole process. (Anonymous, personal communication, September 29, 2014)

Moreover, similar to barriers associated with race, participants felt a burden of isolation that resulted from them being categorized with the stereotypical Black male.

Furthermore, they found it difficult to overcome this classification with the lack of successful Black male role models available to be resources of support for them. In addition, the Rites of Passage Program group coaching sessions facilitated by African American male university faculty and staff, created a safe space to deconstruct the Black male stereotype, emphasize their sense of belonging with the institution and develop mentoring experiences.

In this chapter, I have presented the findings that emerged from examining the conditions that lead to the success or failure among African American undergraduate male students at Predominantly White Institutions. To explore this central research inquiry, an interview-based case study analysis was conducted on ten (10) African American males who were past participants of the Rites of Passage program. The participants were divided into five (5) individuals who graduated from PRU in four (4) years and five (5) individuals who did not graduate from PRU in four (4) years. Three additional research questions were also examined: (a) How was success defined among African American male undergraduate students enrolled at a PWI during the 2009-2013 academic years? (b) During this time frame, what did African American male undergraduate students articulate as the factors that contributed to their success at a PWI?

(c) What did African American male undergraduate students experience as challenges and barriers to success at PWIs?

The results of this study showed that success, identity, a community of support, determination to dispel Black male stereotypes, and financial support were conditions that lead to the success or failure among African American undergraduate male students at predominantly White institutions. Therefore, the findings were presented in the following themes: (a) how was success defined; (b) success, identity, and community support; and (c) challenges and barriers to success. Success was defined by degree completion, co-curricular involvement, and building a network of students, faculty, and other individuals. Developing their personal identity, building a community of support, time management, and academic resources were pinpointed as factors that contributed to success. Adjusting to the academic and social environment, managing financial demands, and negotiating negative perceptions placed on identifying as an African American male were challenges and barriers to success that participants experienced.

Chapter five will summarize the results of this research study while reflecting on its implications. The summary will include the impact of the Rites of Passage program and differences in the experience of those who graduated in four years from those that did not. Additionally, the usefulness of a critical theoretical framework for understanding the experience of African American male students and the implications for higher education to offer transformational educational experiences to this population that might include elements of a Rites of Passage program will also be discussed.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the impact the PRU Rites of Passage Program had on the academic success of its participants. This study was guided by the following central research question: *What are the conditions that lead to the success or failure among African American undergraduate male students at predominantly White institutions?* There were three sub-research questions: (a) How was success defined among African American male undergraduate students enrolled at a PWI during the 2009-2013 academic years? (b) During this time frame, what did African American male undergraduate students articulate as the factors that contributed to their success at a PWI? (c) What did African American male undergraduate students experience as challenges and barriers to success at PWIs?

In response to the purpose of this study and the central research question and subsidiary research questions, I administered a qualitative interview-based case study to examine the factors that impacted the intent and success of former participants of the Rites of Passage program to remain enrolled at PRU and complete their bachelors' degree within a period of four years. A random sample of ten (10) of the program's past participants were selected for this study. The individuals in this study included five (5) African American males who were past participants in Rites of Passage and graduated from PRU in four (4) years, and five (5) African American males who were past

participants in Rites of Passage but did not graduate from PRU in four (4) years. These former students were selected and divided into these categories to identify common themes within similarities and differences that lead toward success or failure in college among each group.

A review of the literature suggests that African American male retention is threatened when students encounter three specific challenges. The first is when their social and emotional needs of developing relationships with students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds are not met. Second, when their level of happiness and sense of belonging to the institution are affected by family concerns (i.e. financial challenges, medical challenges, and child care/child custody issues) they have to deal with that would take their attention away from school. The third challenge is their ability to achieve acceptable levels of academic success. Being that academic ability did not surface as major theme in this case study, the focus rested on social and emotional needs of students as well as their sense of belonging to the institution.

Research findings from the case study were presented in Chapter four. This chapter will present a discussion of the major research findings, along with implications for future research and practices. The discussion in this chapter has been arranged into the following categories, which will also serve as chapter sub-topics: (a) conditions that lead to success or failure of African American male undergraduate students at PWIs; (b) implications of an education and schooling process that is emancipating for African American males; and (c) creating curricular and co-curricular emancipating experiences

for African American males at PWIs. Finally, Chapter five will conclude with recommendations for future studies.

Major findings of this study showed that: (a) success defined by time management, being a well-rounded student, and becoming involved in activities outside of class, degree completion, co-curricular involvement, and building a network of students, faculty, and other individuals; (b) factors that contributed to success at a PWI focused on the ability to develop and recognize personal identity, build a community of support, manage priorities, and utilization of academic resources such as professors, academic advisors, and tutoring services; (c) financial challenges as barriers to success included exercising wisdom when spending refund checks they received each semester for unused student loan money, and the need to work to take care of physical and intellectual needs when coming from families experiencing financial difficulties; (d) racial challenges were barriers to success when they surfaced in the classroom or in an environment connected to their academic major, developed as they were socially adjusting to the campus climate, defined a perception of them, and challenged their individual identity development; and (e) gender challenges as barriers to success when they created a stereotypical depiction and educational limitations for them as an African American male.

Many of the challenges and barriers to success that African American male undergraduate students experienced at PRU are aligned with those in current research literature on what Black males experience at PWIs. At the same time, some unique findings surfaced through the challenges and barriers that participants shared.

Furthermore, Rites of Passage offered academic and co-curricular experiences to address the challenges and barriers participants shared.

Conditions That Lead To Success or Failure of African American Male

Undergraduate Students at PWIs

Participants who graduated in four years defined success as finding your personal identity, being a well-rounded student, and becoming involved in activities outside of class, whereas participants who did not graduate in four years defined success as degree completion, co-curricular involvement, and building a network of students, faculty, and other individuals. Considering both of these definitions, it can be concluded that an environment that fosters self-discovery, networks of support, motivation toward degree completion, and provides opportunity for co-curricular involvement equips students with the ingredients for success. To address this, the Rites of Passage program offered curricular and co-curricular experiences in the form of a learning community that focused on skill development and education in the areas of academic achievement, time management, career development, financial management, presentation of self, civic engagement, and leadership development. Moreover, it appears that none of the research participants specified a grade or grade point average requirement in their definition of success, but focused on environment fit, as supported by Tinto (1987). His retention theory focuses on maintaining several factors in a student's experience, which includes a welcoming environment, high member morale, and organizational processes.

Those individuals who graduated in four years suggested that their ability to develop and recognize personal identity, build a community of support, and manage

priorities were factors that contributed to their success at a PWI. On the other hand, individuals who did not graduate in four years felt that the utilization of academic resources such as professors, academic advisors, and tutoring services were the factors that contributed to their success at a PWI. This suggests that the participants who graduated in four years viewed the management and development of human relation skills, interpersonal skills, and practical competence as factors contributing to success. However those participants who did not graduate in four years viewed the use of academic resources as factors contributing to success. This suggests a positive association between experiences offered through Rites of Passage such as building human relation skills, interpersonal skills, and practical competence, and graduating from a PWI in four years. It also supports research of (Cuyjet, 1997; Edelin-Freeman, 2004; Palmer & Young, 2010; Robertson, et al. 2005; and Robertson & Mason, 2008) that suggests positive social adjustment and personal development are the best determinants of good academic performance among African American males at PWIs.

Participants who graduated in four years reported that their ability to meet and manage financial demands was a barrier to success for them when they were not able to receive support in this area from their family. These demands included financial expenses associated with an academic major, as well as acquiring material possessions to combat the perception of being stereotyped as a societal failure who did not belong in college. The financial aid refund enabled some individuals to change their outward appearance, challenge this stereotype, and develop an internal peace that resulted from not fighting a negative identity placed on them as a Black male but instead, embracing a new positive

perception that created a sense of belonging for them. Many of the participants who did not graduate in four years reflected on how they too did not have financial support from their families and therefore had to work their way through college. Some discussed how working to make ends meet became a priority over school. In response to these challenges, a component of the Rites of Passage Program included workshops focusing on managing finances. In addition, the program fostered a community of support consisting of faculty, staff and students focused on equipping African American males to successfully overcome societal stereotypes facing them. These findings support Cuyjet's (1997) research that financial challenges may be a leading reason why only 38 % of Black college students are males. This also relates to Palmer and Young's (2010) theory that when campus administrators create an environment that fosters a culture of care and a sense of belonging, it has a positive impact on Black male retention. This includes providing an educational environment that is non-intimidating and nurturing of their academic success, and deconstructing stereotypical negative perceptions of African American males.

Individuals who graduated in four years identified the racial identity and stereotypes associated with being a Black male as a barrier to success. This barrier manifested itself in classroom interactions, interactions with peers outside of class, and influenced the formation of a new Black male identity which established a sense of belonging on a predominantly White campus for these students. Those individuals who did not graduate in four years also reported racial identity associated with being a Black male as a barrier to success as they were stereotyped as poor and low achieving. This

barrier became magnified in settings where they were the only one or one of a few African Americans present. Moreover, this negative stereotype and feeling of isolation became intimidating for them. In an effort to address this issue, a component of the Rites of Passage Program included group coaching sessions facilitated by African American male university faculty and staff, that provided students the opportunity for candid conversations with African American male role models to reinforce their sense of belonging with the institution and develop mentoring experiences. This also supports the research of Harper (2009) which suggests that PWI campus administrators should address the racism and structural barriers to achievement and justice that occur on their campuses because it is of major importance to African American male students, who are more at-risk for attrition than other minority groups, as Palmer and Young (2010) explain.

Participants who graduated in four years identified their gender as a barrier to success in the way it defined their individual identity according to societal norms. This barrier was intertwined with racial challenges and a societal view of how masculinity and male identity is defined for African American males. It is also comparable to the previously mentioned racial barrier in how it substantiates a perception and educational limitations placed on African American males. Participants who did not graduate in four years also reported that gender was a barrier to success and agreed that it was reflective of these societal stereotypes placed on African American males. Whereas the group that graduated in four years took the approach of overcoming this barrier by redefining their identity in outward appearance and interactions, the group that did not graduate in four years was not able to do so because they wrestled with carrying the burden of isolation.

The group coaching sessions offered through Rites of Passage, created a safe space for African American men to deconstruct the Black male stereotype, reinforce their sense of belonging with the institution, and develop mentoring experiences. This supports the findings of Robertson and Mason (2008) that Black males experience isolation and challenges with academic performance when they feel that the climate of the larger White society, and the university environment, in particular, is not welcoming. Furthermore, it substantiates the analyses shared by Allen and Haniff (1991), Feagin, Hernan Vera, and Imani (1996), Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), Rankin and Reason (2005), and Tinto (1987) showing that Black students who attend PWIs often struggle with alienation and tend not to involve themselves in co-curricular experiences.

Therefore, personal identity development, environmental fit, positive social adjustment and personal development, management of financial demands, and being in an environment where there is a shared commitment from faculty and staff to foster a culture of care and a sense of belonging are all conditions that lead to success or failure of African American male undergraduate students at PWIs. The key factor that emerges among members of the group that graduated in four years was that they had a determination to challenge the perception that they knew had been placed on them by defining who they were going to be at PRU and how they were going to fit into this particular predominantly White campus. Moreover each of the conditions described above were incorporated in the Rites of Passage program as it encouraged an environment that motivated determination for success. However the program was met with resistance from the University and consequently was eliminated over the course of

time. I will return to this in the conclusion. This is relevant to the challenges facing African American men in our society as their structures of support are dismantled to maintain an imbalanced social structure because addressing this concern compromises the class and power status of the dominant race and class.

Creating Curricular and Co-curricular Emancipating Experiences for African American Males at PWIs

As it currently stands, Predominantly White Institutions do not provide African American male students with an environment that is emancipating for them which is why they persist and graduate at low rates. In order for this to change, these institutions must re-establish their campus environment so they support, cultivate, and enhance the academic and social needs of this population. As educators, we must change a focus from preparing students to contribute toward consumerism and profit making, but rather preparing them to contribute toward a national democratic citizenship according to Giroux (2010). According to bell hooks (1994), a citizenship that builds as a democracy is one where African American males have an equal opportunity for social equality and economic self-sufficiency instead of being restricted to specific social and economic groups even when they go to college and work hard to get out. Freire (1998) discusses, education is not a neutral process as it differs from person to person and therefore one approach and one environment will not be sufficient for everyone. Aronowitz (1997) explains, the way one person defines their identity differs from how another person defines theirs and is based on each individual's cultural practices and beliefs that impact the way they receive education. Harper (2009) suggests, equality in education requires

acknowledgment of racial and social class disparities and equitable responses. This is not desired by the dominant race and class because it compromises their class and power status. Harper and Kuykendall (2012) note that racial equality is not going to evolve on its own; key university stakeholders must spearhead a social movement to make this a priority for those in power. Each of these theories support the establishment of a program such as Rites of Passage that creates an emancipating environment that acknowledges social and class inequities, but reinforces equal opportunity for social equality and economic self-sufficiency.

In consideration of climate challenges facing African American males at PWIs, there are eight characteristics that should be illustrated in such an environment to foster emancipating experiences for this population.

1. First, the Equity Scorecard process is an excellent example of this. Harper and Kuykendall (2012) discuss how key transparency and data-guided institutional activities are supportive in this environment. Through this process, faculty, administrators, and institutional research staff work together to interpret data that are separated by race and gender. This process brings key stakeholders to the table to develop ways to provide equitable responses to race and gender imbalances in student achievement. This was a valuable approach in the development of Rites of Passage as it identified the retention and graduation rates of African American males as a significant concern and provided a starting point to address the issue.

2. African American male students in a supportive environment at a PWI are engaged in meaningful collaboration and viewed as experts in designing, implementing,

and assessing campus initiatives. Often times the Black males invited to participate in these efforts are the well-known student leaders. “Lower-performing undergraduates also should be actively sought, as this opportunity could be a turning point in their college trajectories” (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012, p. 26). These types of experiences can be emancipating being that they motivate a low achieving student toward academic success. Involving African American male students in such collaboration can also provide the institution with a core group of students to continually provide feedback on the needs, experiences, and what would be appealing for the majority of their same-race male peers. This was another component of Rites of Passage, as workshops were open to all students regardless of academic ability and their feedback was solicited in assessing program effectiveness and future initiatives.

3. A strategic plan that is collaboratively developed by institutional stakeholders, ranging from students to the president, can be a valuable resource as it guides university-wide initiatives. It is important for faculty and staff at all levels (including the president, provost, and tenured White professors) and African American male undergraduate students to collaboratively develop a strategic action plan to address institutional barriers to student success. “The document should clearly convey that the institution, not just its Black culture center or employees of color, assumes responsibility for employing a coordinated set of strategies to improve Black male student success” (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012, p. 26). The strategic plan should hold stakeholders accountable for fostering emancipatory educational experiences by articulating the institution’s responsibility in developing an environment conducive to the success of Black male

students and how the success of these students is a priority. Unfortunately, this was not incorporated in the strategic plan at PRU and therefore poses concern for how the challenges facing African American men in society are reinforced at the university level by not being considered a priority.

4. Campuses must place priority on learning, academic success, student development, and increasing graduation rates over social programming by helping students successfully manage challenges or barriers to success.

...architects of the strategy document [strategic plan] and subsequent initiatives should prioritize programs and services that will help Black male students adjust smoothly to the academic demands of college, learn how to effectively study and manage their time, resolve identity conflicts that undermine academic achievement, respond productively to racist stereotypes, and learn how to ask for help well before they find themselves on the brink of failing a course or – even worse – dropping out. (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012, p. 26)

There is a need to develop initiatives that would proactively prepare students to appropriately handle the barriers that lead to low academic achievement and college dropout. Rites of Passage consisted of initiatives designed to help students successfully overcome barriers that negatively impact academic success.

5. Institutions should use the high achieving Black male students as a resource for creating an educational experience that is emancipating for African American males on their campuses and help them be successful. There are Black males who are doing well academically and are involved in co-curricular activities. According to Harper and Kuykendall (2012), approximately one-third of this group of students completes their bachelor's degrees. "Hence, institutional stakeholders should better understand the

conditions and institutionalize the factors that enable current achievers to thrive and that helped Black male alumni to persist when they were enrolled” (p. 27). The best way for institutions to find out how to create an environment that fosters academic achievement of African American male students is to ask current achievers and alumni to share the motivational influences in their retention and graduation. This element was also incorporated in Rites of Passage workshops facilitated by alumni and mentoring relationships with upper-class peers who were doing well academically and involved in co-curricular experiences.

6. Key agents at the institution must have those difficult, yet honest discussions about racism and its harmful impact on the academic achievement of Black male students. When initiatives overlook these issues, they are more likely to experience limited success. “Acknowledging the existence of racism and racial stereotypes is a necessary first step in strategically addressing their harmful effects on Black men’s educational outcomes and sense of belonging” (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012, p. 28). A main ingredient in creating an environment that is emancipating to the academic and social needs of African American students is to acknowledge the existence of racism and racial stereotypes and address them. It is not clear that this was a common practice at PRU and therefore it is assumed that it did not take place. In addition, it also raises concern for how the challenges facing African American men in society are reinforced at the university level by not being considered a priority.

7. Faculty and administrators at all levels should be held accountable for improving African American male persistence, academic achievement, campus

involvement, and degree attainment. The president is accountable to the trustees, executive administrators are accountable to the president, units are accountable to deans and other institutional leaders, and individual educators must hold themselves accountable for meeting institutional strategic goals related to the success of African American male students. This kind of accountability requires reflection that is individual and collective, transparency of assessment data, proof of educational effectiveness, and appropriate steps toward adjusting professional practices that produce inequity.

Institutions should offer professional development opportunities and resources for faculty and administrators who do not know how to effectively engage African American males or provide culturally responsive instruction in the classroom. “Furthermore, these educators should be challenged to confront the implicit biases that lead them to have low expectations for and racist stereotypes about these students” (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012, p. 28). In order to create an environment that yield an educational experience that is emancipating for African American male students at PWIs, faculty and administrators must be challenged to work through their personal biases that cause them to have low expectations and racist views of students from this population. This is another practice where it was not clear if and how it was implemented at PRU. It suggests that the university supported societal inequities facing African American males and the historical process of schooling that reinforced race, class, and gender divisions.

8. Finally, inter-generational mentoring initiatives where peers, faculty, staff, and alumni serve in the capacity of mentoring are great ways to establish an environment that embraces a student’s cultural identity and fosters a freeing experience for them to be

academically successful. Learning communities that are made up of African American males and focused on African American male identity create wonderful environments that allow African American males at PWIs to embrace the culture and identity. This means that students are having educational experiences outside of class such as trips to museums, attending conferences on Black culture, participating in experiential educational team building programs, attending lectures on campus, etc. together and reflecting on them in classes they have together, such as was the case in the Rites of Passage minority male mentoring learning community. Education in this form becomes emancipating as it motivates academic achievement for students while giving them space to “act Black” in order to be academically successful. It appears that we need to do more research in how to develop more environments at PWIs where mentoring groups, leadership opportunities, and African American male learning communities can be established within academics, career aspirations, and personal interests.

Educational emancipation becomes a significant challenge for African American males at PWIs. Many of them become subject to the practice that Harper (2009) refers to as “Niggering,” when their institutions talk about supporting them but never develop any systematic practices to undo racism or break down barriers to success. A successful institutional model is one where faculty, administrators, and students develop a strategic plan and implement activities to address institutional barriers to student success. The strategic plan includes: activities guided by data of inequities; initiatives designed, implemented, and assessed in collaboration with African American male students; actions developed through collaboration of institutional stakeholders ranging from students to the

president; a structure where academic success, student development, and degree completion are prioritized over social programming; initiatives based on research in college male, masculinity, and African American male theory; input from Black male student achievers; honest discussions among influential faculty and staff about racism and its effects on Black male student achievement; and a description of how all faculty and staff will be held accountable for increasing retention, academic achievement, campus involvement, and graduation rates of African American male students. In order for emancipating experiences for African American males to take place, Black male student success must be an institutional priority while faculty and administrators on all levels are held accountable for Black male student success. These practices along with a program like Rites of Passage is an ideal model for PWIs to implement as it recognizes past institutional failures and offers a way to address the democratic promise of political, economic, and social justice in the United States. The implications of a model such as this include increased retention, academic achievement, campus involvement, and degree completion at PWIs.

Implications of an Education and Schooling Process That is Emancipating for African American Males

Although some practical approaches have been presented for addressing societal problems facing African American males at the university level, these approaches cannot fully address these issues solely in these environments; they must begin in K-12 schools. They are deeply rooted in schooling practices, politics, socioeconomics, and societal divisions. We must go beyond these recommendations as they may not be adequate

enough to address the societal challenges facing African American males and other minority communities. Therefore we must implement a more extreme transformation of pedagogical practices in our schools.

Based on the theories of Hannah Arendt, Louis Menand, Gert Biesta, Jacques Ranciere, Cornel West, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Donaldo Macedo, Henry Giroux, bell hooks, Paulo Freire, Immanuel Kant, and others, it becomes clear that society will have to redefine schooling and education, and the way it implements these two institutions. *Schooling*, which I define as a traditional institutional process limited by societal practices that prepare individuals to assume their expected social position, was designed to reinforce socio-economic stratification by preparing students to fill predetermined professional roles. In contrast, theorists have developed an alternative approach to learning. In this context, *education* indicates an individual, experiential process that has the potential to liberate a person so that he or she might move beyond artificially constructed intellectual boundaries and impact society in a democratic and socially-just way. The theorists agree that ideally schooling should prepare students to live democratically in society while education should develop out of their personal experiences and foster transformational thinking.

This study supports the ideology that a critical education that is grounded in democracy, as opposed to traditional schooling, is emancipating for African American male college students. The research findings highlight a difference in intrinsic motivation of students who graduated from a PWI in four years and students who did not. The students who graduated in four years came to college with a different understanding of

how to take information they previously knew and apply it in a new setting to overcome challenges and conquer their goals. On the other hand, the students who did not graduate in four years were learning this skill as they ran into challenges in college. Hannah Arendt and Immanuel Kant would describe schooling as the process of “preparation as practice.” This means that schooling is a process of preparing an individual to learn how to practice a theory in action. This is a continual practice used in every stage of schooling that a person goes through as new information builds off of previous information.

Historically, schools in economically disadvantaged areas have not offered their students the same level of “practice as preparation” providing students with just a minimal, basic education. This has served to reinforce societal stereotypes as expectations for them as citizens, which in turn has restricted their post-high school experiences. The students who did not graduate in four years fell victim to beginning their undergraduate experience at a PWI limiting their opportunities by questions of if, where, and how they approach education and employment after high school. However the students who graduated in four years had more of an emancipatory experience by self-selecting the academic and career field they received schooling for by challenging the view of their assumed role in society.

The findings in this study suggest that education that is emancipating for African American males requires personal identity development through self-discovery as suggested by Ranciere (1991). The students who graduated in four years went through the process of self-discovery by participating in co-curricular experiences outside of class, to define their identity. Ranciere (1991) defines education as when an individual comes into

knowing him or herself. He explains that a person who reflects on himself knows that it is impossible not to know oneself. This individual cannot mislead himself but he can forget himself. Ranciere (1991) states, "The principle of evil lies not in a mistaken knowledge of the good that is the purpose of action. It lies in unfaithfulness to oneself" (p. 57). This means that people should be honest with themselves and come back to what they know to be genuinely in them. He believes that when an individual deviates from their truth and ignore who they are and their purpose in life, the individual is not true to him or herself. The process of becoming true to oneself is when education becomes real for an individual. This is how Ranciere's theory of education exhibits emancipation. It must be meaningful and personal so it becomes a liberating truth to the student by revealing his or her purpose in life. For an African American male student, it prepares him to recognize his distinct significance of who he is and what has shaped him. Furthermore, he is able to participate in the conversation process involving the diverse perspectives that West (1994) discusses.

This study suggests that our current society is in need of African American males who can transform their thinking to be critical and democratic to address its needs. Biesta (2010) believes that we must focus on the process of socialization and subjectification in order to meet the criteria for education. He explains that subjectification is a process of learning through experiences that incorporate individual identity. Therefore, these experiences involve a Black male embracing difference through interactions with diverse groups while sharing the uniqueness of his cultural identity. This creates new knowledge areas and provides ways for a unique identity to be included in the educational experience

that is emancipating. This type of experience will prepare students to take a critical and democratic approach in addressing societal needs.

This study further substantiates the ideologies of Menand, Biesta, Ranciere, West and Arendt discussed in chapter two that schooling, particularly incorporating individual identity, that is emancipatory includes the success of African American male college students as a component of an education that is liberating. Academic success results from intrinsic motivation that a student has when he is positioned toward independence as Menand and Biesta discuss. The intrinsic motivation will ignite a transformation within the student where he develops knowledge from personal experiences and shares it with others as an authentic expression as Ranciere (1991) describes. Conversation will be the tool he uses to share his knowledge and gain understanding in a democratic process as West (1994) and Arendt have illustrated. When conversation incorporates multicultural perspectives, it results in an equitable response to societal hierarchies as West and Arendt allude to. This form of communication empowers the African American male student to freely express his identity and actively participate in the teaching and learning process. As he becomes more engaged in the schooling experience in this way, he feels empowered to be an expert on his own life experiences, has a clear understanding of the course material, and becomes academically successful because he has been educationally emancipated.

However a challenge to these students is embracing education as a freeing experience from their social inequities. Greene (1998) describes this pursuit of freedom and education. She discusses that there is an absence of freedom in schools that is tied to

a disinterest and lack of motivation that students have for education. Greene (1998) explains that an absence of freedom is equivalent to an absence of concern for how young people feel or how they are affected by societal circumstances. One group that she cites as an example is minority students. Greene (1998) explains that they have a difficult time seeing the benefits of education because of the inequities they deal with as well as the ones they see other members of their cultural group deal with. She states,

The young people may not chafe under inequities being kept alive through schools, as inequities often are; they are likely to treat them as wholly “normal,” as predictable as natural laws. The same might be said about advantaged children who grow up with a sense of entitlement and privilege, but still feel they have no choice. The challenge is to engage as many young people as possible in the thought that is freedom. (Greene, 1998, 125)

In essence Greene explains that young people have come to accept these inequities as the way things are supposed to be in society and they do not see the potential for an alternative.

Similarly, Macedo (2006) argues that schools are teaching educators, and in turn students, to create a racially structured behavior that is made up of a social hierarchy of dominance. He says,

Even if we want to give such educators the benefit of the doubt, their naïveté is innocent, but ideological. It is ideological to the degree that they have invested in a system that rewards them for reproducing and not questioning dominant mechanisms designed to produce power asymmetries along the lines of race, gender, class, culture, and ethnicity. (Macedo, 2006, p. 12)

Macedo (2006) goes on to discuss how when teachers buy into the dominant ideological system that is set up by the dominant class, they conform to myths created about the minority classes.

Macedo (2006) also explains that the original intent of education was not to benefit minority students. He states, "I am increasingly convinced that the U.S. educational system is not a failure. The failure that it generates represents its ultimate victory to the extent that large groups of people, including the so-called minorities, were never intended to be educated" (p. 36). He goes on to explain that they were never intended to be part of the dominant political and economic structures. Macedo argues this is why we can sit back and tolerate dropout rates of minority students.

The question we must consider as educators is, how we will present the notion of freedom in our classrooms? We need to think through how we will design our curriculum to engage our minority populations in an opportunity for freedom that they can strive for. We must also engage our privileged population about why it is important for them to help create a sense of entitlement for everyone. This is the ache that we all should have that pushes us to struggle for freedom.

Developing a process of education and schooling that is emancipating for African American males requires creating an environment that prepares students to become responsible citizens who work toward democratic promises of economic and social justice in America. bell hooks (1994) discusses the notion of a learning community where difference could be acknowledged, and there would be an acceptance and affirmation that ways of knowing are intertwined in history and power relations. She explains that this

would be the environment to break through the barriers of collective academic denial and come to the acceptance that the education that most of us received and are providing as educators is not and will never be politically neutral; however, there is a hope that this process we have developed would fulfill the dream that education would be a practice of freedom. hooks (1994) states, “Many folks found that as they tried to respect ‘cultural diversity’ they had to confront the limitations of their training and knowledge, as well as a possible loss of ‘authority’” (p. 30). In other words, hooks is explaining that the process of respecting cultural diversity within a learning environment requires individuals to become comfortable with being uncomfortable even if this means relinquishing one’s power and control.

Giroux (2010) also discusses a notion of corporate culture as a pedagogical force in democracy. He explains that democratic politics cannot be effective unless people implement educational strategies that illustrate how power is responsive to the needs of citizens in a real democracy. He blames the militarized corporate state and the sovereign market for limiting the focus of democracy to overcrowded prisons or shopping malls. Giroux (2010) argues,

Making education central to any viable notion of politics as well as making the political more pedagogical suggests that intellectuals, artists, community workers, parents, and others need to connect with diverse groups of people in those public and virtual sites and spheres that enable new modes of dialogue to take place and work to move beyond such exchanges to the much more difficult task of building organized and sustainable social movements. (p. 109)

He believes, as educators, we need to direct our attention and resources to learning as a vehicle to address the social, political, and personal issues facing us.

A critical and liberating education teaches students how to develop a democratic power that responds to the issues facing society. This would be a democracy that focuses on education as a vehicle for upward mobility and in turn allocates major resources in that direction. This would be a democracy that focuses on eliminating social class oppression and structure and establishing equitable opportunities for all cultural communities to achieve the “American Dream” instead of being placed out of it. The American Dream would then become a norm as opposed to a hope, a transition that requires a critical mass of representatives from privileged groups as well as oppressed groups who are committed to suffer for freedom.

Relatedly, Ladson-Billings (2003) also discusses the concept of socio-political consciousness as a way to help students develop a sense of a mutual, reciprocal attitude toward those whom they share cultural solidarity with. She explains that it is designed to help students address larger socio-political questions about how schools work with society to address ongoing issues of inequity and social injustice. Ladson-Billings (2003) says,

If students do not begin to ask these questions, they are likely to reiterate positions that suggest that the reason people are unsuccessful in school is that they do not try hard enough. Culturally relevant teaching is designed to help students move past a blaming the victim mentality and search for the structural and symbolic foundations of inequity and injustice. (p. 111)

Here, Ladson-Billings explains how education can be a practice of freedom when social structures of inequality and injustice are deconstructed.

In making education central to our democratic agenda, we should send the message to our elected officials that we desire to help our children develop into responsible citizens who are change agents for society. This would require that we acknowledge the oppression of various groups in many forms as well as our desire to address it with more equitable solutions. Our schools will then become the instrument to prepare students for political, social, and economic issues they will have to face as they continue our struggle for equity and freedom. We cannot rely on our government to do this on its own, we must be the catalysts for change in our communities to influence the agendas of our political officials.

Freire (1998) describes how educational autonomy involves responsibility. He illustrates this as freedom with concern for the community. Although we are free to do what we want, our actions have an effect on our community. As it relates to educators, their freedom to teach the curriculum without concern for the success of their students will impact achievement gaps and career qualifications by demographic populations, as well as how our society is shaped for the future. It will also impact the services and resources that will be provided to us and our children. Freire (1998) explains,

When I speak of education as intervention, I refer both to aspiration for radical changes in society in such areas as economics, human relations, property, the reactionary position whose aim is to immobilize history and maintain an unjust socio-economic and cultural order. (p. 99)

In this statement, Freire is describing an educational emancipation that establishes equitable socio-economic conditions and cultural relations across demographic populations.

As we allocate resources for a critical and liberating education, we prepare teachers and students to be co-learners and co-teachers. Teachers can design a curriculum that invites influences of students' cultural norms. This means that teachers can get in position to learn from students' experiences and the cultural communities they represent. Teachers in turn can use this new knowledge to develop educational experiences that incorporate cultural teaching practices that are familiar to students' cultural norms. Once students are engaged in the learning process, the learning process can be designed to empower them to be change agents for political, social, and economic issues facing their community.

bell hooks (1994) describes a notion of engaged pedagogy that sets the expectation that teachers and students are a community of learners. She explains that engaged pedagogy values student expression and empowers teachers. Through this process teachers become vulnerable as they become transparent in sharing their personal narratives. hooks describes how engaged pedagogy is modeled by progressive professors. She states,

Progressive professors working to transform the curriculum so that it does not reflect biases or reinforce systems of domination that are most often the individuals willing to take the risks that engaged pedagogy requires and to make their teaching practices as site of resistance. (hooks, 1994, 21)

In other words, those educators who are progressive design curriculums that deconstruct bias, hierarchical structures of power, and establish their classrooms as environments that embrace and incorporate difference in the learning process.

We must develop this progressive approach to education so that our students will become progressive thinkers and culturally responsive citizens. Teachers have to develop a classroom atmosphere where there is concern for community. As teachers share their personal stories, students will do the same. This creates an opportunity for classroom dialogue around the issue of concern for one another. Through this experience, a community of co-learners and co-teachers become a community of caring individuals. These are the caring individuals that teachers can prepare to be sensitive to social inequities and critical in their approach to addressing them. It is these unique experiences that will materialize into an education that is analytical and therapeutic.

Freire (1998) describes this as the process of methodological exactitude. This is the process where teachers are gaining new knowledge and students become part of a transformation where they become active participants in the development and redevelopment of what is being taught along with their teacher. He illustrates how this process results in a practice of a new way of being which reveals itself through the humility and humbleness of the teacher. Freire (1998) says, "The attitude, which is a way of being and not just an occasional phase, of the teacher engaged in right thinking demands a seriousness in the search for secure and solid bases for his/her positions" (p. 40).

Teachers who desire to be part of a critical and liberating educational experience must develop a lifestyle that exemplifies methodological exactitude. In other words, they should become humble learners who consider the classroom as a space for mutual exchange of knowledge with their students as they determine the direction for the class. If

a teacher can do this, then he or she can guide students on an educational journey that leads them to find the meaning behind their life struggles and concerns. This becomes an educational journey that is liberating and transformative as it helps each individual define their own meaning for life.

Students should go on a quest to find meaning behind their own struggles, concerns, and experiences. This kind of journey can be both liberating and authentic because it enables students to be thoughtful and reflective by validating their experiences in the classroom. Shapiro (2006) explains, “Authentic learning is a process in which a student seeks answers to his or her concerns, and struggles to give meaning to his or her own experience” (p. 109). This type of learning engages student participation and creativity on a high level. According to Shapiro, the participation and creativity is inclusive of human interaction and dialogue.

It is also important that the dialogue and human interaction in the classroom focus on issues of race, class, and sexual orientation. Educators should teach in a way that frees members of these groups from systematic oppression. Teaching should be a vehicle that frees historically oppressed cultural communities from societal barriers that exist in the form of career opportunities, economic development, healthcare, and education. For too long, these societal barriers have kept a majority of people in bondage while a small population of those in power decided their living conditions and opportunities. We must train a new generation of individuals to develop a critical and liberating mindset for change.

Freire (1998) suggests that teachers struggle to incorporate the universal human ethic in their teaching and their interactions with students. This universal human ethic confronts racial, sexual, and class discrimination. Freire (1998) states,

On the contrary, I am speaking of a universal human ethic, an ethic that is not afraid to condemn the kind of ideological discourse I have just cited. Not afraid to condemn the exploitation of labor and the manipulation that makes a rumor into truth and truth into mere rumor. To condemn fabrication of illusions, in which the unprepared become hopelessly trapped and the weak and the defenseless are destroyed...The ethic of which I speak is that which feels itself betrayed and neglected by the hypocritical perversion of an elitist purity, an ethic affronted by racial, sexual, and class discrimination. (p. 24)

According to Freire, educators should practice a standard of integrity that challenges social oppression at all levels and equips students to uphold such a measure as responsible citizens.

hooks (1994) describes the classroom as a location of possibility that creates an opportunity to labor for freedom. She explains that education can be a vehicle toward a paradise. She states,

The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (hooks, 1994, 207)

In other words, education becomes emancipating when we use it as an opportunity to collectively redesign and re-establish our society into a utopia that becomes our socially-just reality. We can begin to construct this utopia by addressing issues such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and class.

hooks (1994) illustrates how an awareness of class differences plays a role in a multicultural learning setting. She explains that it is not necessarily acceptable to confront class issues in the classroom because issues of guilt can be a barrier to authentic discourse, which is required for a liberating education. However, if we are ever going to reshape how our pedagogical process is shaped by middle-class norms, hooks argues that we must challenge status quo. She states,

My awareness of class has been continually reinforced by my efforts to remain close to loved ones who remain in materially underprivileged class positions. This has helped me to employ pedagogical strategies that create ruptures in the established order, that promote modes of learning which challenge bourgeois hegemony. (hooks, 1994, 185)

In this statement, hooks describes how class divisions become real for her because they are not solely issues to discuss in the classroom and they extend to those individuals we know and love. She uses the example of how they become personal for her by the effect they have on a loved one who are close to her.

The discussion around privilege may be difficult to have because it makes the beneficiaries of racism, classism, and sexism uncomfortable. However, it is the first step to deconstructing societal norms that motivate oppressive practices. These discussions should take place in our classrooms if we are going to create educational experiences that are liberating and critical and offer methodological healing for oppressed and privileged groups. A concern for community will heal privileged groups while freedom from old societal norms will heal the oppressed.

This is a type of education that encourages opportunity and discourages apathy. It is an education that teaches students to push for an ideal society where everyone shares concerns for the basic needs and equitable opportunities of one another. The focus is on a collective movement toward change. No one group is fighting for their individual welfare and basic needs alone but everyone fights for everyone's welfare and basic needs. This then becomes an educational experience where we challenge the mindset of students to move away from adapting to current problems and move toward creating liberating solutions.

This liberating education becomes one where we teach students to search for possibilities for change. Our teaching should encourage them to dream of a utopia that would support the welfare of all of its citizens. This is how we prepare our children to be responsible citizens who are culturally responsive, striving to raise their awareness of oppressive forces affecting their neighbors and develop ways to address them. Shapiro (2006) describes this kind of education as the lesson of hope. He explains it as,

The sense that the world can be improved and problems surmounted by concerned and thinking citizens. To teach students so that they have a greater sense of possibility means to challenge cynicism, conformity, or the sense of fatalism that many young people have about their world—the belief that not much can be really changed. (Shapiro, 2006, 177)

This is an education that does not prepare students to conform to a society with an oppressive system but rather to actively pursue change whether it is political, social, economic, or educational.

Giroux (2010) presents higher education as a democratic public sphere. He states that democracy and its political, economic, and social influences are not cheap. He places the responsibility on academia to establish the university as a space for democracy by addressing racial, economic, and political issues that affect its environment. He argues,

If academics believe that the university is a space for and about democracy, they need to profess more, not less, about eliminating the racial, economic, and political conditions that fill their ranks with adjuncts and that remove faculty from exercising power in university governance. Instead, academics must work toward eliminating the economic conditions that prevent working class and middle-class youth from getting a decent postsecondary education. (Giroux, 2010, 187)

According to Giroux, we have a responsibility as academic stewards in institutions of higher education to restructure these environments into agencies of democracy and provide access to individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds. This will eliminate financial barriers that prevent individuals from low-income families from benefiting from a college educational experience.

As a student affairs practitioner at a university, it is my belief that universities were designed to offer this kind of critical and liberating educational experience for its students. We should challenge students' beliefs and provoke thought around social, political, and economic issues and help them make the connection to how these issues affect them. At the university level we can begin by creating opportunities for individuals from middle and low economic classes to have access to college education at our institutions. This will be a key instrument in helping students move toward change. It is also our role as an institution of higher education to provide opportunities for students to

practice applying theoretical concepts of change through student organization involvement, service-learning projects, and diversity workshops.

I believe that an education that is critical and liberating is one that prepares students to be culturally-responsive citizens who are passionate for equitable solutions to societal norms. It is the role of our schools to provide opportunities to address issues of social justice and various forms of oppression facing minority groups. These experiences are effective when teachers and students are co-learners and co-teachers in the education process. Such a learning experience empowers students to be change agents for the political, economic, educational, and social welfare for all individuals. Critical classroom dialogues around these issues are the means to liberate students to open their heart and mind to one another, regardless of cultural background, and find ways to address reality and move forward for positive change. This is the critical and liberating education that will free and heal our society.

It has been presented that access to education and success in an academic environment are ingredients for emancipation. If college and university environments are going to be conducive to the retention and graduation of African American males, they must transform into spaces of emancipatory schooling and education. Educators should consider how they can develop curricular and co-curricular activities that create emancipating experiences for African American males. Emancipatory education at the university level can be applied through the schooling process and its classroom conversations. University educators should think about how they can develop teaching strategies that require more peer-to-peer communication where students can have

opportunities to develop knowledge through analysis of personal experiences and learn how to share their knowledge with others as an artistic expression. If the mission of an institution includes preparing students to be responsible citizens who are capable of addressing current and future issues, university educators should be intentional in creating a campus climate that guides African American male students and all other students in experiencing an education that is emancipating. They should examine if and how emancipatory schooling practices that are democratic and lead to critical education can impact retention and graduation rates of African American male undergraduate students.

I agree with the theories and research in this area. This study confirms that a critical education grounded in democracy, as opposed to traditional schooling, would lead toward emancipation for African American male college students. If there is not an intended societal effort to move toward critical education and emancipatory practices in schooling, then we do not offer alternatives to decrease the high school dropout rate, the imprisonment rate, the unemployment rate, absence on college campuses, and lack of fathers in homes within the African American male community.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The findings in this study revealed a number of promising practices at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), as well as expanding current research literature on factors impacting the retention and graduation of African American male undergraduate students. Furthermore, several patterns and themes surfaced that allowed for a discussion of conditions that lead to the success or failure among African American

undergraduate male students at PWIs. Findings also identified common themes, with similarities and differences that lead toward success or failure in college among former Rites of Passage participants who graduated from PRU in four years and those who did not. The findings also showed that the Rites of Passage program had a direct impact on the success of its participants by offering experiences that addressed the conditions leading to success. These findings are critical for identifying, defining, and advancing efforts toward persistence and graduation of African American male undergraduate students now and in the future. It can also be argued that the findings in this study contribute to the premise that creating participatory experiences on a college campus that are inclusive of the cultural identity of African American male students can become fully emancipatory, resulting in a citizenry that is built on the principle of a collective responsibility for fulfilling America's promises for democracy, equality, and social justice.

The intention of this study is to impact higher education by providing a framework for creating a campus environment at PWIs that is conducive to success and graduation of African American male students. It proposes practical solutions to increasing retention and graduation rates of this demographic population on the campuses of PWIs. Related to this notion of emancipatory education, Wolk (2007) suggests higher education environments should respect the identity of its diverse student populations. Therefore, this study also offers an adaptable model for colleges and universities to use to address ways to improve retention and graduation rates of other demographic populations, resulting in an increase in overall degree attainment. It is intended to make

these institutions more attractive to prospective students, increase enrollment and income from tuition, and position them as leaders in higher education.

In relation to future studies, there are a few considerations that are recommended in review of these findings. First, the selection sample in this study was limited to past participants of the Rites of Passage program. Although this program and its former participants were appropriate to use as a case study, choosing a different selection criteria may have uncovered other university programs or groups that could have served as suitable case studies. Other case studies that use different selection criteria and expand the research sample are a suggested consideration. Exploration of various program models that impact student success would reinforce embracing a mindset toward the educational emancipation that Wolk (2007) describes as respecting the uniqueness of different ways of learning.

Another consideration to explore is whether a relationship exists between the elimination of the Rites of Passage program and the historical social struggle facing African American males in America. It has been presented that Rites of Passage contained all the ingredients to help African American male students overcome barriers to their success at PRU, yet administrators who did not identify as or with African American males made the decision to end the program because they did not see it to be beneficial toward their interests. Even more, they were not very open toward putting time and resources into creating an environment for liberating educational experiences although the data continues to reflect systemic oppression through low retention rates, graduation rates, and academic performance. The failure of administrators to see the

benefits of this program could also reflect a larger institutional misunderstanding and lack of awareness around the historical social struggles and educational opportunities for African American males as well as our progress around this issue thus far. This practice differs from a learning experience that is emancipating as it is a form of schooling that leads to educational conformity that diminishes a belief in the intellectual capacity of our students that Wolk (2007) describes.

Additionally, future research could be expanded to examine how and if the environment at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) contribute toward educational emancipation by beginning with an examination of retention and graduation patterns of African American males. We might even consider a study on how the environment at PWIs impact educational emancipation for African American females as well as their retention and graduation at these institutions. Some scholars may be curious about how this issue will affect the traditional African American family structure such as redefining gender roles, while others may want to investigate how this issue presents limitations upon socioeconomic class potential. Additional inquiry may revolve around what the implications are for African American males if the issue of their educational emancipation is never addressed. Due to the shifting demographics of today's society, this study could be applied to other minority groups on college campuses. For example, more attention needs to be given to how recruitment, retention, and graduation rates, impact educational emancipation for Hispanic/Latino students as this population is quickly becoming the nation's largest minority community.

Wolk (2007) presents some learning approaches for educators to implement in schools to benefit students from all backgrounds. One approach is to make schools inquiry-based. He believes that having a curriculum focusing on inquiry, where students question, investigate, and analyze our lives and the world around us, makes the inquiry process a component of the content to be learned. Wolk (2007) states, “By doing ‘inquiry’ across the curriculum, children learn to ask questions, seek knowledge, understand multiple perspectives, and wonder about the world” (p. 652). He believes that this content should be coordinated in every grade curriculum from kindergarten through high school. Wolk (2007) explains that it is important that we honor the uniqueness of our children. He states,

There is not just one way to learn anything. The fact that our schools take children who are very different and seek to force them into the same schooling and learning mold is just further evidence of their disrespect for children as individuals. (Wolk, 2007, 652)

In other words, we diminish our belief in the intellectual capacity of our children by forcing them to conform to one form of schooling and education. Furthermore this insults them as individuals as well as their intelligence.

Wolk (2007) also talks about how learning approaches will benefit students when they develop a love for learning. He explains that it is difficult to inspire students to learn and inquire about knowledge when we tell them what to learn, when to learn and how to learn. Wolk (2007) says,

This means giving students some control over what they study and how they show their learning. Children should have regular opportunities across the curriculum to

initiate learning, explore their own questions, and learn about their own interests.
(p. 652)

Here Wolk argues that we must offer students a liberating learning experience by giving them significant ownership over their learning and developing them into life-long learners.

The research presented shows us that in order to move toward educational emancipation, we must create environments at K-12 schools and colleges or universities that are inclusive of the culture and identity of African American males. The atmosphere inside and outside the classroom must send the message that success is equated with each individual's cultural identity. Therefore I would like to recommend research on how educational leaders can design experiences and activities for students to be able to see personal and cultural relationships that draws their participation. In the case for African American males, we as university practitioners must design our curricular and co-curricular experiences to be inviting of the cultures and identities of students from this population. This is a springboard to developing an education experience that becomes a liberating truth for students and freeing them from a historic cycle of discriminating schooling practices.

There are some practical ideas we as educators can use to contribute toward creating educational experiences that are emancipatory by implementing this research at PWIs. Intergenerational mentoring initiatives where peers, faculty, staff, and alumni serve in the capacity of mentoring are great ways to establish an environment that embraces a student's cultural identity. Approaches, such as mentoring, give students

freedom to equate “acting Black” or proudly embracing their cultural identity, with being academically successful. Learning communities that are made up of African American males and focused on African American male identity create wonderful environments that allow African American males at PWIs to embrace their culture and identity. This means that students are having educational experiences outside of class such as trips to museums, attending conferences on Black culture, participating in experiential educational team building programs, attending lectures on campus, etc. together and reflecting on them in classes. This is motivational in their academic achievement as it gives them space to “act Black” in order to be academically successful. It appears that we need to do further research in how to develop more environments at PWIs where mentoring groups, leadership opportunities, and African American male learning communities can be established within academics, career aspirations, and personal interests.

Although oppressive practices related to race and class have evolved over time, there is that critical hope that we can strive toward social change by embracing practices and learning approaches that promote equity. We would also need to adopt the concept of sociological mindfulness by making a conscious effort to understand how past beliefs and practices influence the privileged or powerful status quo of one group over another and begin to take steps toward ending these attitudes and behaviors. In the context of schools, this requires us to understand the systems of power and privilege that exist in schools and how these systems put some groups of students at an advantage and others at a disadvantage. It also requires us to take strides to end these oppressive practices through

approaches that lead to educational emancipation. This will allow us as educators to develop teaching strategies that complement the diversity and the uniqueness that exist among the students we serve.

REFERENCES

- Allen, W. R. (1991). Introduction. In W. R. Allen, E. G. Epps, & N. Z. Haniff (Eds.), *College in Black and White: African American students in predominantly White and in historically Black public universities* (pp. 1–14). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Allen, W. R. (1992). The color of success: African-American college student outcomes at predominantly White and historically Black public colleges and universities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(1), 26–44.
- Allen, W. R., & Haniff, N. Z. (1991). Race, gender, and academic performance in U.S. higher education. In W. R. Allen, E. G. Epps, & N. Z. Haniff (Eds.), *College in Black and White: African American students in predominantly White and in historically Black public universities* (pp. 95–109). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Allen, W. R., Jewell, J. O., Griffin, K. A., & Wolf, D. S. S. (2007). Historically Black colleges and universities: Honoring the past, engaging the present, touching the future. *Journal of Negro Education*, 76(3), 263–280.
- Aronowitz, S. (1997). Between nationality and class. *Harvard Educational Review*, 67(2), 188–207.
- Bergin, D., & Cooks, H. (2002). High school students of color talk about accusations of “acting White.” *The Urban Review*, 34, 113–134.
- Berry, S. (1988, February 19). Moran calls for enriched black studies. *Greensboro News & Record*, pp. D1–D2.
- Biesta, G. (2010). *Good education in the age of measurement: Ethics, politics, democracy*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Bourte, G. S. (1992). Frustrations of an African-American parent: A personal and professional account. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73, 786–788.
- Brooks, M., Jones, C., & Burt, I. (2012). Are African-American male undergraduate retention programs successful? An evaluation of an undergraduate African-American male retention program. *Journal of African American Studies*, 17(2), 206–221, doi:10.1007/s12111-012-9233-2

- Brown, M. C., II, & Dancy, T. E., II. (2010). Predominantly White institutions. In K. Lomotey (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of African American education* (pp. 524–527). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. doi:10.4135/9781412971966.n193
- Brown, M. C., II, & Davis, J. E. (2001). The historically Black college as social contract, social capital, and social equalizer. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 76(1), 31–49.
- Carter, P. (2006). Straddling boundaries: Identity, culture, and school. *Sociology of Education*, 79, 304–328.
- Coleman, J. (1961). *The adolescent society: The social life of the teenager and its impact on education*. New York, NY: The Free Press of Glencoe.
- Cookson, P. W., & Persell, C. H. (1985). *Preparing for power: America's elite boarding schools*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Cuyjet, M. J. (1997). African American men on college campuses: Their needs and their perceptions. *New Directions for Student Services*, 80, 5–16.
- Cuyjet, M. J. (2006). *African American men in college*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley.
- Delpit, L. D. (1998). The silence dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(3), 280–298.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- DeSousa, D. J., & Kuh, G. D. (1996). Does institutional racial composition make a difference in what Black students gain from college? *Journal of College Student Development*, 37(3), 257–267.
- Edelin-Freeman, K. (2004). African American men and women in higher education: "Filling the glass" in the new millennium. In A. McDaniel & O. McDaniel. (Eds.), *21st century African American cultural issues: A reader* (pp. 123-137). Mason, OH: Thomson Publishing.
- Ellingson, L. L. (2011). Analysis and representation across the continuum. In N. M. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.; pp. 595–610). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Feagin, J. R. (1992). The continuing significance of racism: Discrimination against Black students in White colleges. *Journal of Black Studies*, 22(4), 546–578.
- Feagin, J. R., Vera, H., & Imani, N. (1996). *The agony of education: Black students at white colleges and universities*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fleming, J. (1984). *Blacks in college: A comparative study of student success in Black and White institutions*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fleming, J., & Howard University. (1976). *The lengthening shadow of slavery: A historical justification for affirmative action for Blacks in higher education*. Washington, DC: Howard University Press.
- Ford, D. Y. (1996). *Reversing underachievement among gifted Black students: Promising practices and programs*. Education and Psychology of the Gifted Series. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fordham, S. (1988). Racelessness as a factor in Black students' school success: Pragmatic strategy or Pyrrhic victory? *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(1), 54–84.
- Fordham, S. (1996). *Blacked out: Dilemmas of race, identity, and success at Capital High*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethic, democracy, and civic courage*. Oxford, England: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Fries-Britt, S. L. (1997). Identifying and supporting gifted African American men. In M. J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *Helping African American men succeed in college: New directions for student services* (No. 80; pp. 65–78). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fries-Britt, S. L., & Turner, B. (2002). Uneven stories: Successful Black collegians at a Black and White campus. *The Review of Higher Education*, 25(3), 315–330.
- Garibaldi, A. M. (1997). Four decades of progress . . . and decline: An assessment of African American educational attainment. *Journal of Negro Education*, 66(2), 105–120.
- Gibbs, G. R. (2007). *Analyzing qualitative data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gibson, R. (1986). *Critical theory and education*. London: Hodder and Stroughton.
- Giroux, H. A. (2010). *Politics after hope: Obama and the crisis of youth, race, and democracy*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

- Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Gordon, M. (Ed.). (2001). *Hannah Arendt and Education: Renewing our Common World*. Westview Press.
- Green, V. M. (1981). Blacks in the United States: The creation of an enduring people. In G. P. Castile & G. Kusher (Eds.), *Persistence peoples: Cultural enclaves in perspective* (pp. 69–77). Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.
- Greene, M. (1988). *The dialectic of freedom*. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Grube, G. M. A., & Reeves, C. D. C. (Trans.). (1992). *Plato republic*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981). *Effective evaluation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Gurin, P., & Nagda, B. A. (2006). Getting to the “what,” “how,” and “why” of diversity on campus. *Educational Researcher*, 35(1), 20–24.
- Harmon, D. (2002). *In light of our differences: How diversity in nature and culture makes us human*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Harper, S. R. (2006). Peer support for African American male college achievement: Beyond internalized racism and the burden of “acting White.” *Journal of Men’s Studies*, 14(3), 337–358.
- Harper, S. R. (2009). Niggers no more: A critical race counternarrative on Black male student achievement at predominantly White colleges and universities. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies In Education*, 22(6), 697–712.
- Harper, S. R., & Kuykendall, J. A. (2012). Institutional efforts to improve Black male student achievement: A standards-based approach. *Change*, 44(2), 23–29.
- Hirt, J. B., Strayhorn, T. L., Amelink, C. A., & Bennett, B. R. (2006). The nature of student affairs work at historically Black colleges and universities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(6), 661–676.

- History of African American studies*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.uncg.edu/afs/history>.
- Hoffman, K., Liagas, C., & Snyder, T. D. (2003). *National Center for Education Statistics: Status and trends in the education of Blacks*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pub2003/2003034.pdf>
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Gloria Watkins.
- Huff, R. E., Houskamp, B. M., Watkins, A. V., Stanton, M., & Tavegia, B. (2005). The experiences of parents of gifted African American children: A phenomenological study. *Raepcr Review*, 27, 215–221.
- Johnson, V. D. (2001). The Nguzo Saba as a foundation for African American college student development theory. *Journal of Black Studies*, 31(4), 406–422.
- Kadlec, A. (2007). *Dewey's critical pragmatism*. New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Kim, M., & Conrad, C. (2006). The impact of historically Black colleges and universities on the success of African-American students. *Research in Higher Education*, 47(4), 399–427.
- Kincheloe, J. L., McLaren, P., & Steinberg, S. (2011). Critical pedagogy and qualitative research: Moving to the bricolage. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.; pp. 163–178). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kinney, D. A. (1993). From nerds to normals: The recovery of identity among adolescents from middle to high school. *Sociology of Education*, 66, 21–40.
- Ladson-Billings, G. J. (2003). I ain't writin' nuttin': Permission to fail and demands to succeed in urban classrooms. In L. Delpit and J. K. Dowdy (Eds.), *The skin that we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom* (pp. 107–120). New York, NY: The New Press.
- Landry, C. C. (2002). Retention of women and people of color: Unique challenges and institutional responses. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 4(1), 1–13.
- Lane, A. (2001). Is Hannah Arendt a multiculturalist? In M. Gordon (Ed.), *Hannah Arendt and education: Renewing our common world* (pp. 153–173). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

- LaVant, B. D., Anderson, J., & Tiggs, J. W. (1997). Retaining African American men through mentoring initiatives. In M. J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *Helping African American men succeed in college: New directions for student services* (pp. 43–52). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y., Lynham, S., & Guba, E. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.; pp. 97–128). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Macedo, D. (2006). *Literacies of power: What Americans are not allowed to know* (Expanded ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- McArdle, C., & Young, N. (1970). Classroom discussion of racial identity or how can we make it without “acting White.” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 41, 135–141.
- Menand, L. (2001). *The metaphysical club*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Merriam, S. B. (1991). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mingle, J. R. (1980). *Black and Hispanic enrollment in higher education 1978: Trends in the nation and the south*. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Board.
- Museus, S. D., Nichols, A. D., & Lambert, A. D. (2008). Racial differences in the effects of campus racial climate on degree completion: A structural model. *The Review of Higher Education*, 32, 107–134.
- Neal-Barnett, A. (2001). Being Black: New thoughts on the old phenomenon of acting White. In A. Neal-Barnett, J. M. Contreras, & K. A. Kerns (Eds.), *Forging links: African American children: Clinical developmental perspectives* (pp. 75–87). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Nora, A., & Cabrera, A. F. (1996). The role of perceptions in prejudice and discrimination and the adjustment of minority students to college. *Journal of Higher Education*, 67(2), 119–148.
- O’Connor, C. (1999). Race, class, and gender in America: Narratives of opportunity among low-income African American youths. *Sociology of Education*, 72, 137–157.

- O'Connor, C., Mueller, J., Lewis, R., Rivas-Drake, D., & Rosenberg, S. (2011). "Being" Black and strategizing for excellence in a racially stratified academic hierarchy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(6), 1232–1257.
- Oakes, J. (2005). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality* (2nd ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Ogbu, J. U. (1992). Understanding diversity and learning. *Education Researcher*, 21(8), 5–14.
- Outcalt, C. L., & Skewes-Cox, T. E. (2002). Involvement, interaction, and satisfaction: The human environment at HBCUs. *Review of Higher Education*, 25(3), 331–347.
- Palmer, R. T. (2008). Promoting HBCUs: Black colleges provide a superior education; they just need to toot their horns a little louder. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 24(26), 29.
- Palmer, R., & Gasman, M. (2008). It takes a village to raise a child: The role of social capital in promoting academic success for African American men at a Black college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(1), 52–70.
- Palmer, R., & Young, E. (2010). How a supportive campus climate promotes student success. In T. L. Strayhorn, and M. C. Terrell (Eds.). *The evolving challenges of Black college students: New insights for policy, practice, and research* (pp. 138–160). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Patitu, C. L. (2007). College choice and satisfaction level of African American college students. *Journal of African American Studies*, 5, 71–92.
- Patterson, D. W. (1989, November 11). UNC system enrolling more blacks. *Greensboro News & Record*, p. B1.
- Perna, L. W. (2001). The contribution of historically Black colleges and universities to the preparation of African Americans for faculty careers. *Research in Higher Education*, 42(3), 267–294.
- Perry, P. (2002). *Shades of White: White kids and racial identities in high school*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Person, D. R., & Christensen, M. C. (1996). Understanding Black student culture and Black student retention. *NASPA Journal*, 34(1), 47–56.

- Peterson, M., Blackburn, R., Gamson, Z., Arce, C., Davenport, R., & Mingle, J. (1978). *Black students on White campuses: The impacts of increased Black enrollments*. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan.
- Rancière, J. (1991). *The ignorant schoolmaster: Five lessons in intellectual emancipation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Rankin, S. R., & Reason, R. D. (2005). Differing perceptions: How students of color and White students perceive campus climate for underrepresented groups. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(1), 43–61.
- Reichard, D. J., & Hengstler, D. D. (1981, May 20). A comparison of Black and White student backgrounds and perceptions of a predominantly White campus environment: Implications for institutional research and program development. AIR Forum 1981 Paper.
- Reichard, D. J., Pratt, L. K., Sutton, D. F., & Uhl, N. P. (1981). Environment of a predominantly Black and a predominantly White campus as seen by Black and White students In J. E. Smith (Ed.), *The impact of desegregation on higher education: Proceedings of the National Conference on Desegregation in Higher Education* (pp. 75–105). Durham, NC: Institute on Desegregation, North Carolina Central University.
- Robertson, R. V., & Mason, D. (2008). What works? A qualitative examination of the factors related to the academic success of African American males at a predominantly White college in the south. *Challenge: A Journal of African American Studies*, 14(2), 67–89.
- Robertson, R. V., Mitra, A., & Delinder, J. V. (2005). The social adjustment of African American females at a predominantly White Midwestern university. *Challenge: Journal of African American Studies*, 8(4), 31–45.
- Roebuck, J. B., & Murty, K. S. (1993). *Historically Black colleges and universities: Their place in American higher education*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Sellers, R. M., Chavous, T. M., & Cooke, D. Y. (1998). Racial ideology and racial centrality as predictors of African American college students' academic performance. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 24, 8–27.
- Shapiro, H. S. (2006). *Losing heart: The moral and spiritual miseducation of America's children*. New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69, 60–73.

- Spencer, M., & Tinsley, B. (2008). Identity as coping: Assessing youths' challenges and opportunities for success. *Prevention Researcher, 15*(4), 17–21.
- Spring, J. H., & Spring, J. H. (2005). *The American school, 1642–2004*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist, 52*(6), 613–629.
- Steinberg, L. (1996). *Beyond the classroom: Why school reform has failed and what parents need to do*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Stinson, D. W. (2010). When the “burden of acting White” is not a burden: School success and African American male students. *Urban Review, 43*(1), 43–65.
- Tatum, B. D. (1997). *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? And other conversations about race*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Thayer, P. B. (2000). *Retention of Students from first generation and low income backgrounds*. Washington, DC: National Trio Clearinghouse.
- Tierney, W. G. (1999). Models of minority college-going and retention: Cultural integrity versus cultural suicide. *The Journal of Negro Education, 65*(2), 122–132.
- Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Tyson, K. (2011). *Integration interrupted: Tracking, Black students, and acting White after Brown*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Tyson, K., Darity, W., Jr., & Castellino, D. R. (2005). It's not “a Black thing:” Understanding the burden of acting White and other dilemmas of high achievement. *American Sociological Review, 70*(4), 582–605.
- University of North Carolina at Greensboro Jackson Library. (n.d.). *First African American male graduates* [Data file]. Available from UNCG University Archives.
- University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Office of Institutional Research. (2012). *Fall persistence % of cohort* [Data file]. Retrieved from <http://ire.uncg.edu/cohorts/default.asp?REP=PER&TERM=FALL&dep=UNIV&DEMO1=SEX&DEMO2=RACE&MET=PERC>.

- University of North Carolina, General Administration. (2007, December). *The University of North Carolina fall 2007 enrollment report*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, General Administration.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2012a). *The Condition of Education 2011* (NCES 2012-045). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d11/tables/dt11_347.asp
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2012b). *Digest of education statistics, 2011* (NCES 2012-001). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d11/tables/dt11_237.asp
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). *Digest of education statistics, 2013* (NCES 2013-037). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_376.asp
- Weaver, K. (2011). Standardized testing: Measurement of academic achievement. *Online submission* ERIC EBSCOhost (accessed July 16, 2015).
- Wenglinsky, H. H. (1996). The educational justification of historically Black colleges and universities: A policy response to the U.S. Supreme Court. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 18(1), 91–103.
- Wesley, J. L. (1988, February 18). UNCG students say concerns of Blacks get lower priority. *Greensboro News & Record*, p. D1-D2.
- West, C. (1994). Race and social justice in America. *Liberal Education*, 80(3), 32–39.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wolk, S. (2007). Why go to school? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(9), 648–658.
- Young, V. (2007). *Your average nigga: Performing race, literacy, and masculinity*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What motivated you to go to college?
2. What did you expect to gain from college?
3. How did you define success in college?
4. What did you experience as challenges, difficulties, and problems while you were in college?
 - Talk to me about the relationship you believe these challenges had to your race.
 - Talk to me about the relationship you believe these challenges had to your gender.
 - Talk to me about the relationship you believe these challenges had to your socioeconomic class.
5. What helped you to be successful in college?
6. What are some support services that you think would have helped you overcome challenges you faced in college?
7. What were some issues or factors outside of your college experience that affected your ability to succeed in college?
8. How did you feel you were perceived as an African American male at PRU?
 - What were some examples of experiences you had that led you to feel this way?

- What do you feel administrators and professors should know and do to create a welcoming, affirming, and inclusive environment at PRU?

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONS/PROMPTS FOR FOCUS GROUPS

Questions/Prompts for Focus Group 1 (Did Not Graduate in 4 years)

1. It seems that managing your time was common theme in each of your individual interviews. Talk to me about why you think this is the case.
2. It seems that financial challenges was common theme in each of your individual interviews. Talk to me about why you think this is the case.
3. It seems that racial challenges was common theme in each of your individual interviews. Talk to me about why you think this is the case.
4. How have relationships with other students impacted your undergraduate experience at PRU?
5. How have relationships with professors or administrators impacted your undergraduate experience at PRU?
6. What role have family played in your success in college?
7. Talk to me about how your experiences have all been similar...
8. Talk to me about anything that has been shared that seems strikingly different to you...
9. What advice would you give to other African American males about how they can be successful at a PWI?

Questions/Prompts for Focus Group 2 (Graduated in 4 years)

1. It seems that developing your individual identity was a common theme in each of your individual interviews. Talk to me about why you think this is the case.

2. It seems that managing your time was common theme in each of your individual interviews. Talk to me about why you think this is the case.
3. It seems that financial challenges was common theme in each of your individual interviews. Talk to me about why you think this is the case.
4. How has your involvement in student organizations and activities impacted your undergraduate experience at PRU?
5. What role have professors and administrators played in your success in college?
6. Talk to me about how your experiences have all been similar...
7. Talk to me about anything that has been shared that seems strikingly different to you...
8. What advice would you give to other African American males about how they can be successful at a PWI?

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to capture external demographic information of research participants who are former PRU students and were involved in Rites of Passage. The questions are designed to gather information during their collegiate years, such as: single-parent home, income, first-generation status, marital and parental status, hometown, hometown demographics, type of high school, religion, and sexual orientation. Internal demographic factors focus on their campus experience such as: academic major, grade point average, academic classification, general involvement in campus activities, and involvement in diversity activities on campus.

Demographic Information

1. My racial/ethnic category is (Check all that apply):
 - ☐ Non Resident Alien
 - ☐ Hispanic/Latino
 - ☐ Black or African American, non-Hispanic
 - ☐ White, non-Hispanic
 - ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic
 - ☐ Asian, non-Hispanic
 - ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic
 - ☐ Two or more races, non-Hispanic
 - ☐ Race and/or ethnicity unknown

2. Gender (Choice):
 - ☐ Feminine or Woman
 - ☐ Masculine or Man
 - ☐ Transwoman
 - ☐ Transman
 - ☐ Gender Queer or Gender Fluid
 - ☐ Other, please specify _____

3. My sexual orientation is: (Choice)
 - ☐ Heterosexual

- ☐ Lesbian
- ☐ Gay
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Transsexual
- ☐ Two-spirit
- ☐ Queer
- ☐ Asexual
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

4. Citizenship (Choice):

- ☐ U. S. Citizen
- ☐ Resident Alien
- ☐ Non-Resident Alien
- ☐ Pending Citizenship

5. My age when I enrolled at PRU was: (Choice)

- ☐ 17-19
- ☐ 20-22
- ☐ 23-25
- ☐ 25+

6. Please describe your religious affiliation during your time at PRU.

7. Hometown (City, State): _____

8. How would you describe your hometown demographics?

Academic Information

9. High School (Name, City, State): _____

10. Type of School (Choice):

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private
- ☐ Parochial
- ☐ Charter
- ☐ Magnet
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____

11. What year did you Graduate from High School? _____

12. What was your High School Grade Average (Choice):

- ☐ A
- ☐ A-
- ☐ B
- ☐ B-
- ☐ C
- ☐ C-
- ☐ D

13. Please indicate if you took standardized college exams and what your score was:

Exam	Yes	No	Score
SAT			Verbal Math
ACT			

14. When did you First Enrolled at PRU (ex: Fall 2010)? _____

15. What was your classification when you enrolled? (Choice)

- ☐ 1st Time Freshman (0-29 hrs)
- ☐ 2nd Year Freshman (1-29 hrs)
- ☐ Sophomore (30-59 hrs)
- ☐ Junior (60-89 hrs)
- ☐ Senior (90 + hrs)

16. Did you attend another 4-year institution before coming to PRU?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

17. Did you transfer to PRU from another institution?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

18. Did you transfer from PRU to another institution?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

19. Did you graduate from PRU?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

20. Did you graduate from PRU in 4 years?

- ☐ Yes

☐ No

21. What was your Cumulative GPA when you left PRU?

22. What was your Enrollment Status? (Choice)

☐ Full Time (12+ hrs)

☐ 3/4 Time (9-11 hrs)

☐ 1/2 Time (6-8 hrs)

☐ <1/2 Time (< 6 hrs)

23. What was your Major? _____

24. What was your Minor/Concentration? _____

25. What were your Career Goals during your time at PRU?

26. What campus activities outside of class were you involved in during your time at PRU? _____

27. What diversity-related activities outside of class were you involved in during your time at PRU? _____

Family Information

28. How many family members lived in your home during your time at PRU, including you? _____

29. Did you live with your parents during your time at PRU?

☐ Yes

☐ No

30. Please explain if there was a change in your living status during this time.

31. What was your marital status during your time at PRU? (Choice)

☐ Married

☐ Single

☐ Other, please specify: _____

32. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Occupations during your time at PRU:

	Occupations
Father	
Mother	

33. Did the parent(s)/guardian(s) with whom you lived prior to your 18th birthday graduate from a 4-year institution? If "Yes", please list the institution each parent/guardian attended:

	Father	Mother
Yes		
Institution		
No		

Financial Information

34. Annual Income (after taxes) as classified by the US Department of Education during your time at PRU: (Please indicate income for both yourself and your parent(s) or guardian(s)):

	Parent(s) or Spouse	Student
\$0 - \$17,505		
\$17,506 - \$23,595		
\$23,596 - \$29,685		
\$29,686 - \$35,775		
\$35,776 - \$41,865		
\$41,866 - \$47,955		
\$47,956 - \$54,045		
\$54,046 - \$60,135		
Other		

35. Did you ever apply for financial aid during your time at PRU?

☐ Yes
☐ No

36. Were you employed at a job during your time at PRU?

☐ Yes
☐ No

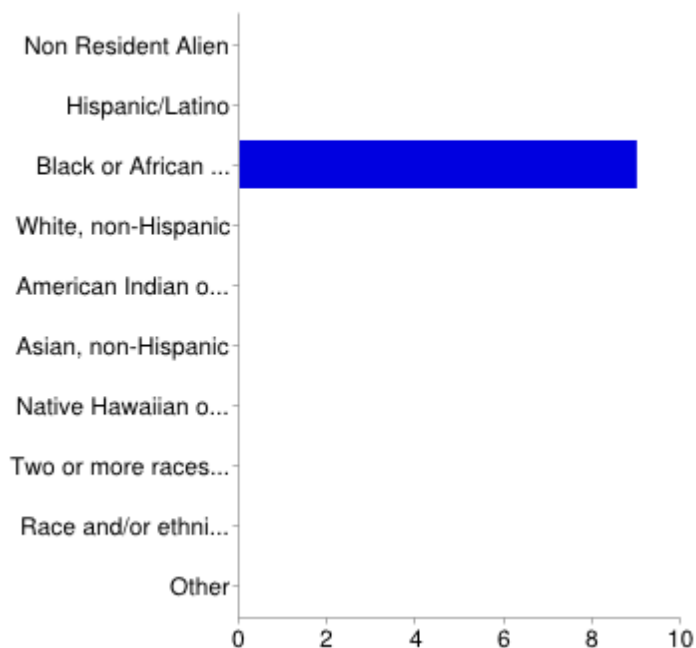
If yes, how many hours per week did you work?

Work Study _____

Other _____

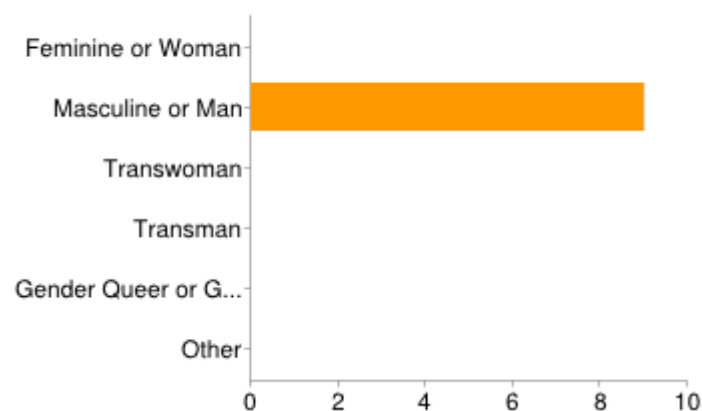
Demographic Information

1) My racial/ethnic category is:



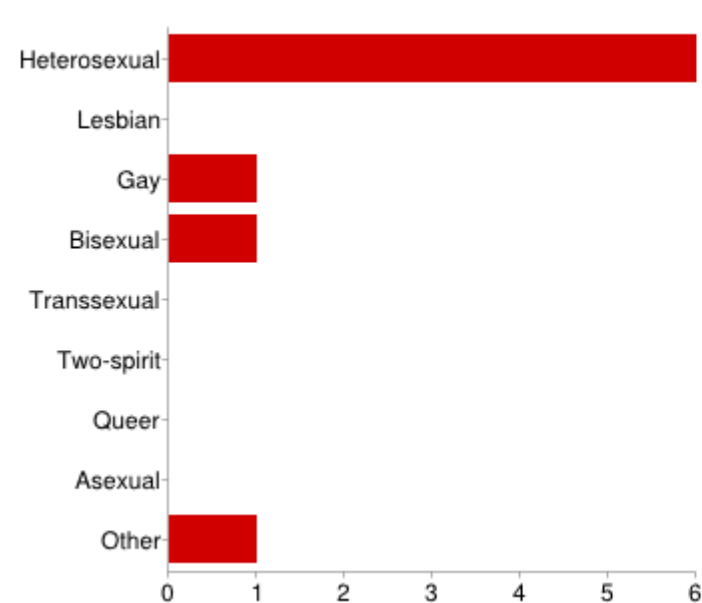
Non Resident Alien	0	0%
Hispanic/Latino	0	0%
Black or African American, non-Hispanic	9	100%
White, non-Hispanic	0	0%
American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic	0	0%
Asian, non-Hispanic	0	0%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	0	0%
Two or more races, non-Hispanic	0	0%
Race and/or ethnicity unknown	0	0%
Other	0	0%

2) Gender:

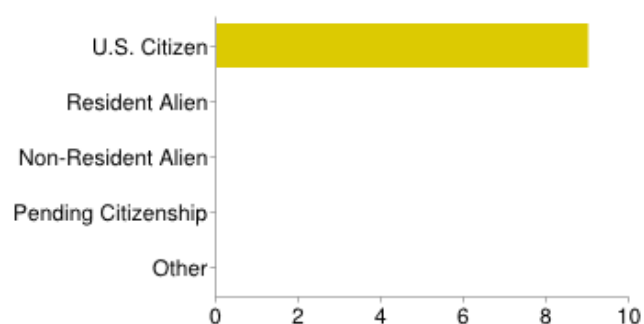


Feminine or Woman	0	0%
Masculine or Man	9	100%
Transwoman	0	0%
Transman	0	0%
Gender Queer or Gender Fluid	0	0%
Other	0	0%

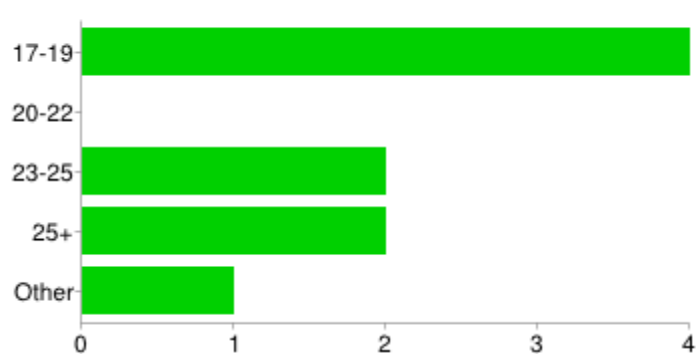
3) My sexual orientation is:



Heterosexual	6	66.7%
Lesbian	0	0%
Gay	1	11.1%
Bisexual	1	11.1%
Transsexual	0	0%
Two-spirit	0	0%
Queer	0	0%
Asexual	0	0%
Other	1	11.1%

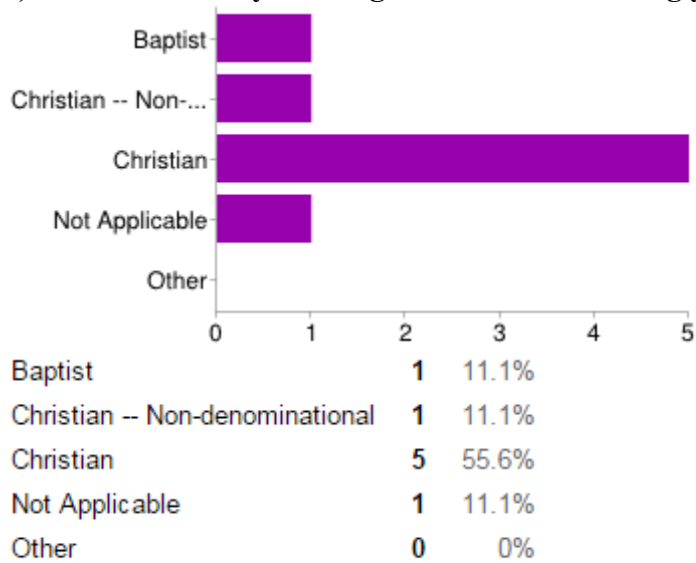
4) Citizenship:

U.S. Citizen	9	100%
Resident Alien	0	0%
Non-Resident Alien	0	0%
Pending Citizenship	0	0%
Other	0	0%

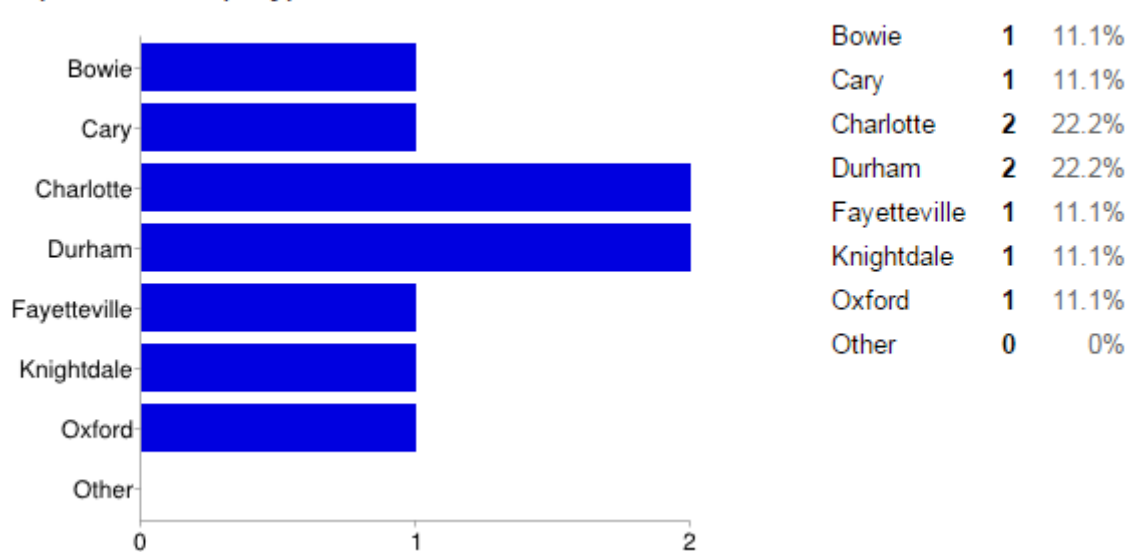
5) My age when I enrolled at UNCG was:

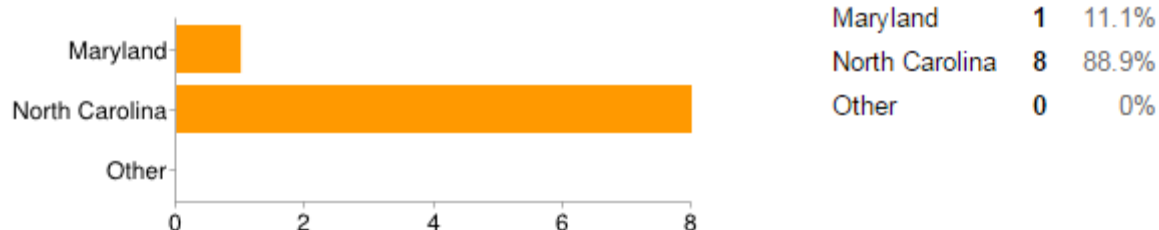
17-19	4	44.4%
20-22	0	0%
23-25	2	22.2%
25+	2	22.2%
Other	1	11.1%

6) Please describe your religious affiliation during your time at PRU.



7a) Hometown (City)



7b) Hometown (State)**8) How would you describe your hometown demographics?**

Mixed races. Classes were defined.

racially diverse

40% white, 40% black, 10% hispanic

Medium sized city. It's hard to describe an entire cities demographics. The neighborhoods I grew up where mostly upper-middle class, so the demographics of those neighborhoods where white. (Provided a link with following caption: Wikipedia article on Charlotte, NC because, laziness)

Predominantly African American area

Small town, Mixed population

No answer given

Large percentage African-American, yet diverse as well

Mixed Races, military town, my neighborhood was mostly caucasian

Academic Information**9a) High School (Name):**

Southside HS

typical middle class

Knightdale HS

Harding University HS

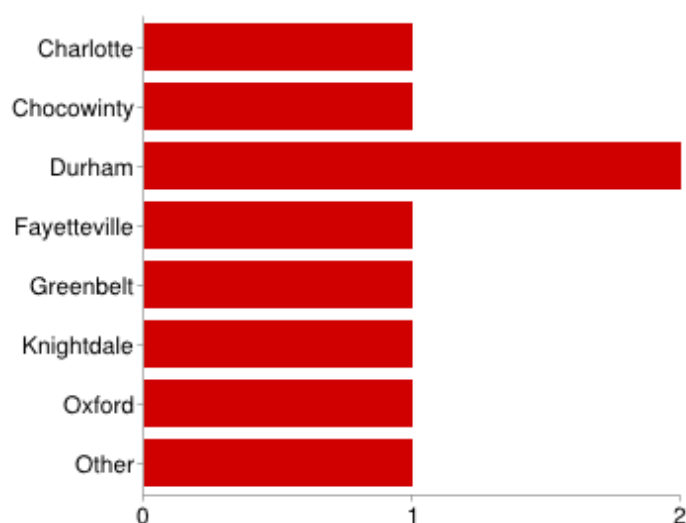
Durham School of the Arts

Jack Britt High

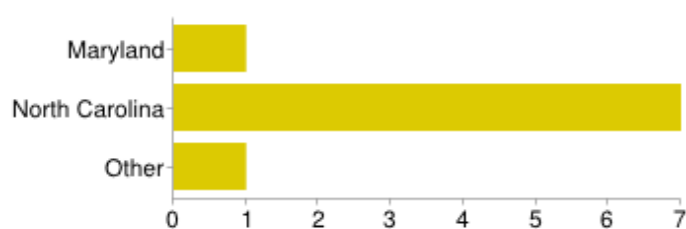
Eleanor Roosevelt HS

J.F. Webb HS

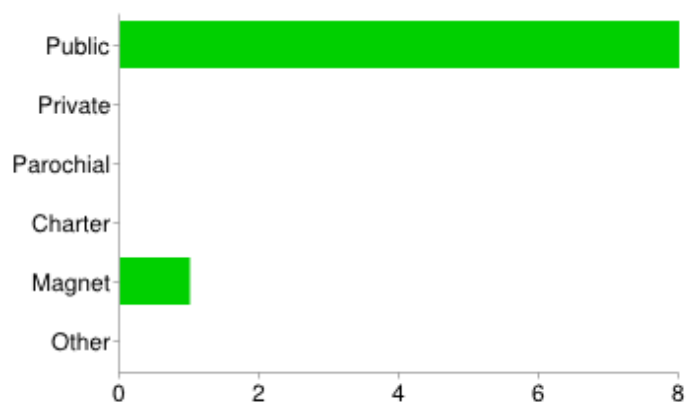
Hillside High

9b) High School (City):

Charlotte	1	11.1%
Chocowinty	1	11.1%
Durham	2	22.2%
Fayetteville	1	11.1%
Greenbelt	1	11.1%
Knightdale	1	11.1%
Oxford	1	11.1%
Other	1	11.1%

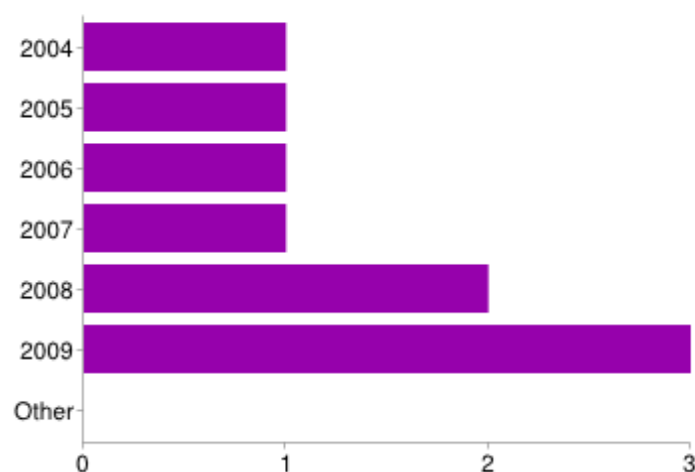
9c) High School (State):

Maryland	1	11.1%
North Carolina	7	77.8%
Other	1	11.1%

10) Type of School:

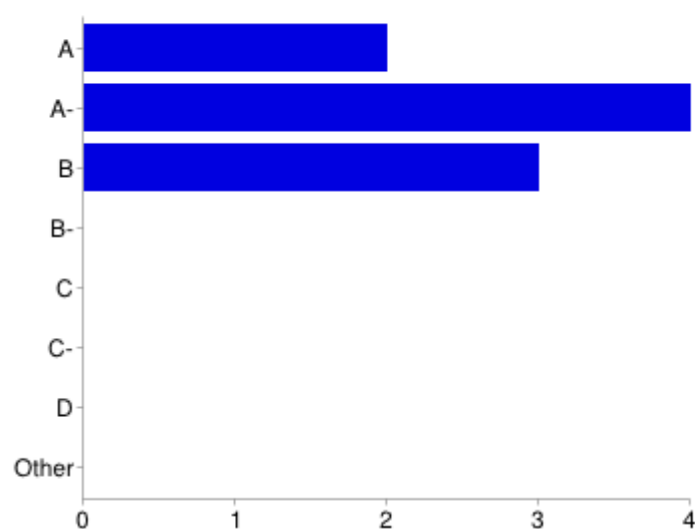
Public	8	88.9%
Private	0	0%
Parochial	0	0%
Charter	0	0%
Magnet	1	11.1%
Other	0	0%

11) What year did you Graduate from High School?



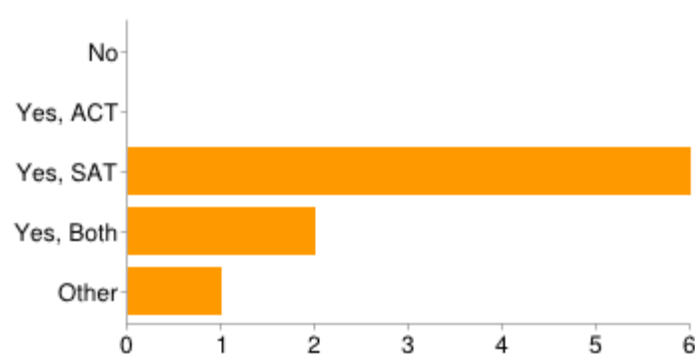
2004	1	11.1%
2005	1	11.1%
2006	1	11.1%
2007	1	11.1%
2008	2	22.2%
2009	3	33.3%
Other	0	0%

12) What was your High School Grade Average?



A	2	22.2%
A-	4	44.4%
B	3	33.3%
B-	0	0%
C	0	0%
C-	0	0%
D	0	0%
Other	0	0%

13a) Please indicate if you took standardized college exams:



No	0	0%
Yes, ACT	0	0%
Yes, SAT	6	66.7%
Yes, Both	2	22.2%
Other	1	11.1%

13b) If yes to SAT, Please indicate what your TOTAL score was:

1800 (I honestly don't remember the last 2 digits)

1590

1780

1050

No answer given

13c) If yes to SAT, Please indicate what your VERBAL score was:

?

No answer given

450

13d) If yes to SAT, Please indicate what your MATH score was:

600

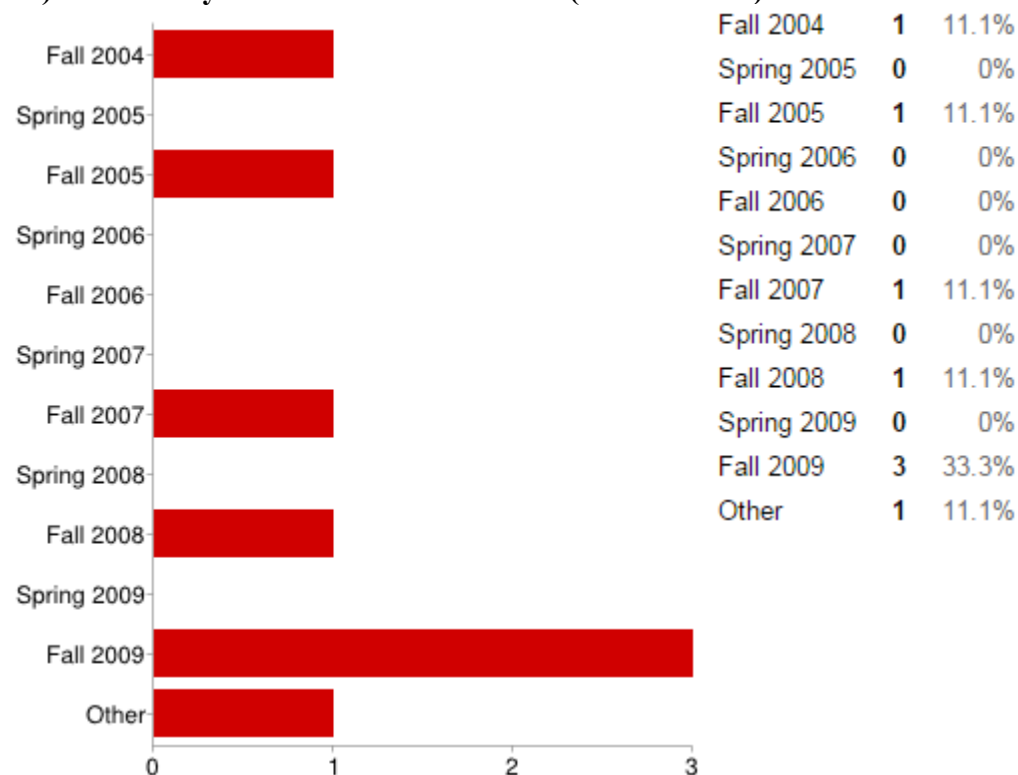
?

? (This one was higher though)

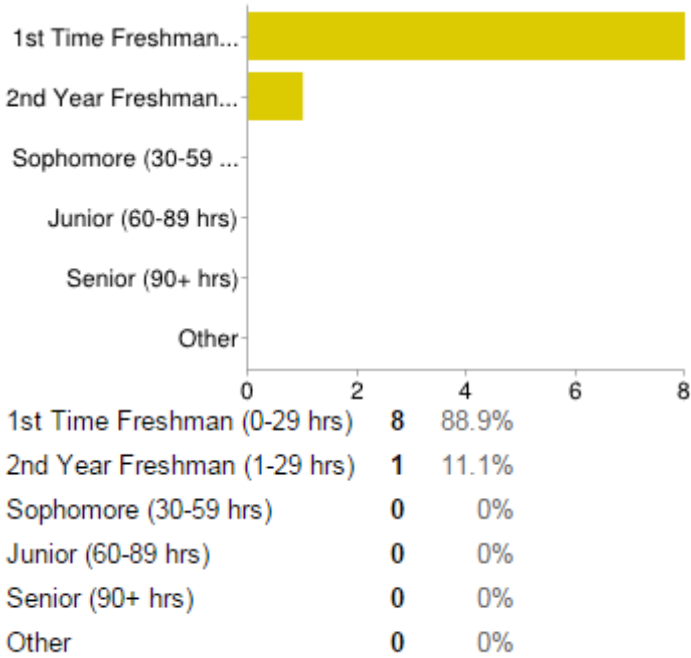
No answer given

13e) If yes to ACT, Please indicate what your score was:

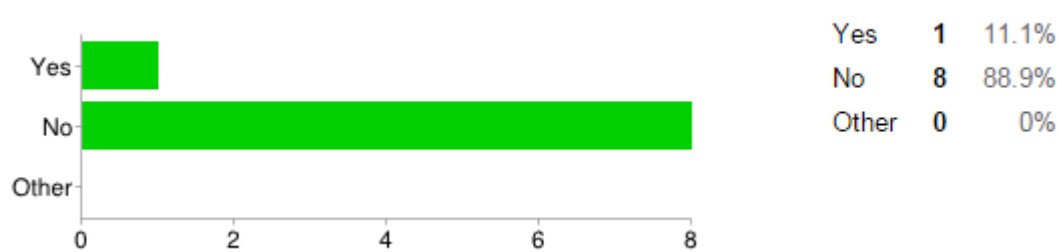
No answer given

14) When did you First Enrolled at PRU (ex: Fall 2010)?

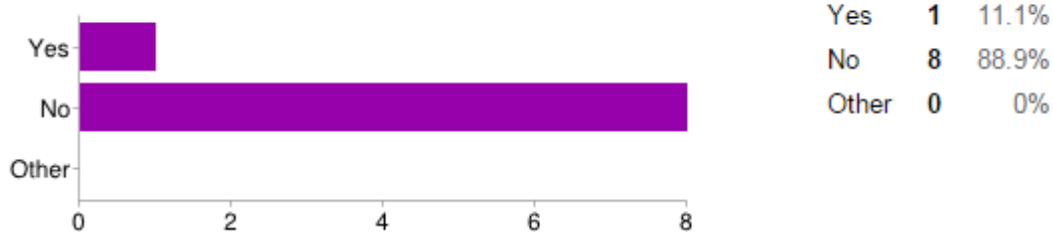
15) What was your classification when you enrolled?



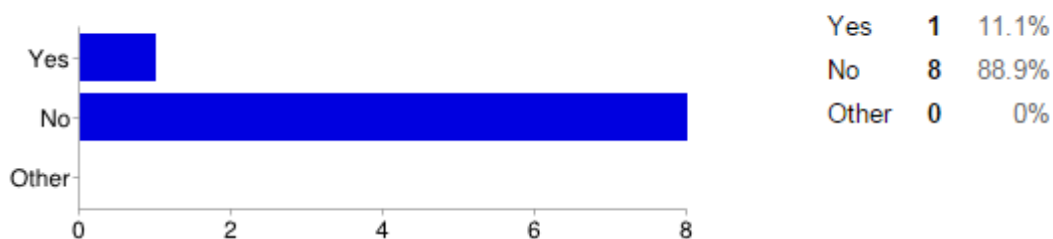
16) Did you attend another 4-year institution before coming to UNCG?



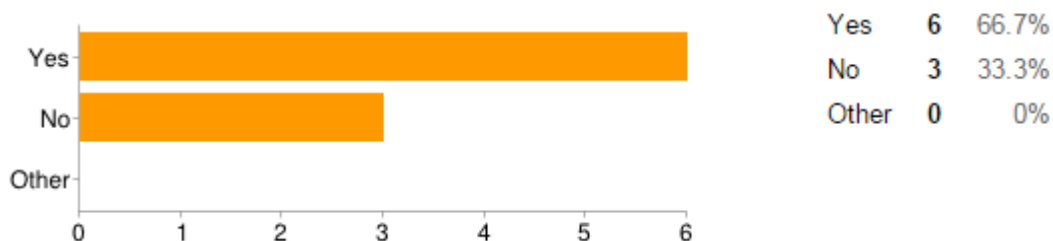
17) Did you transfer to UNCG from another institution?



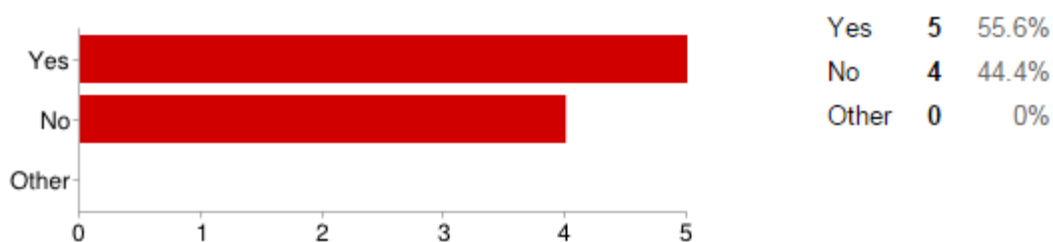
18) Did you transfer from UNCG to another institution?

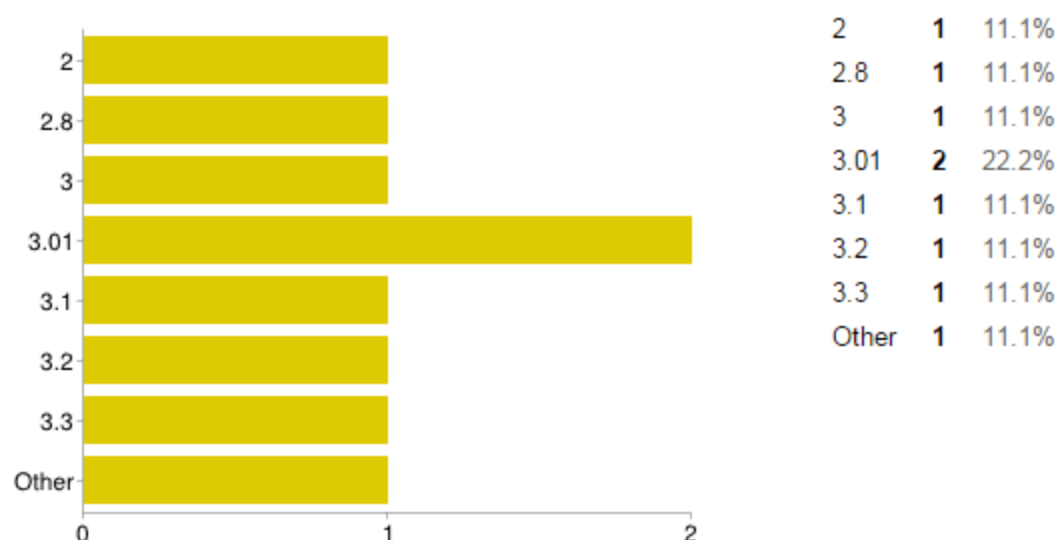
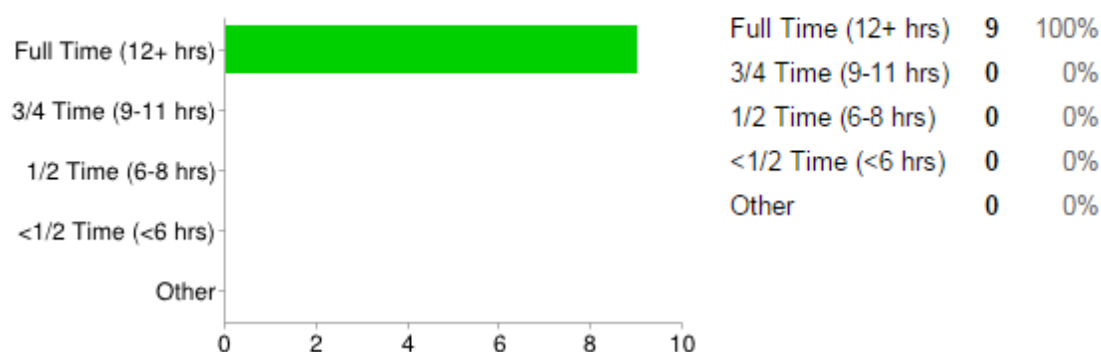


19) Did you graduate from UNCG?



20) Did you graduate from UNCG in 4 years?



21) What was your Cumulative GPA when you left UNCG?**22) What was your Enrollment Status?****23) What was your Major?**

Computer Science
 History with Teaching Licensure
 Accounting
 African American Studies
 Business Administration
 Kinesiology
 History
 Music Education
 Theatre

24) What was your Minor/Concentration?

Sociology
 N/A

African American Studies

No answer given

Vocal performance

25) What were your Career Goals during your time at PRU?

Becoming a software developer extraordinaire

To become a music educator

wanted to attend grad school

Educator

Accounting in Non-Profit Sector

To become a Full time performer in music and musical theatre

No answer given

to be prepared to teach when I leave school

Occupational Therapist

26) What campus activities outside of class were you involved in during your time at PRU?

Orientation Staff, NBS, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc, Alpha Psi Omega, Housing and Residence Life

Rites of Passage, Men Creating Change, Black Business Student Association, Brothers'

Leading Healthy Lives, Beta Alpha Psi, OLSL Leadership Development

New Era, Rites of Passage

Greek life, NAACP, Rites of Passage, students Advisory

ACM (vice president/secretary), National society of Black engineers

Spartan orientation staff, RA, Peer Academic leader, NAACP

Greek Life, Rites of Passage, AFS Ambassador

No answer given

Phi Beta Sigma, African Student Union, Neo-Black Society, Student government, campus activities Board

27) What diversity-related activities outside of class were you involved in during your time at PRU?

Rites of Passage, cafe ole, Office of Multicultural Affairs events

Office of Multicultural Affairs

Fraternity, Housing & Residence Life

Rites of Passage, Men Creating Change, Black Business Student Association, Brothers'

Leading Healthy Lives, OLSL Leadership Development

Step show, talent shows, greek life, rites of passage, NAACP

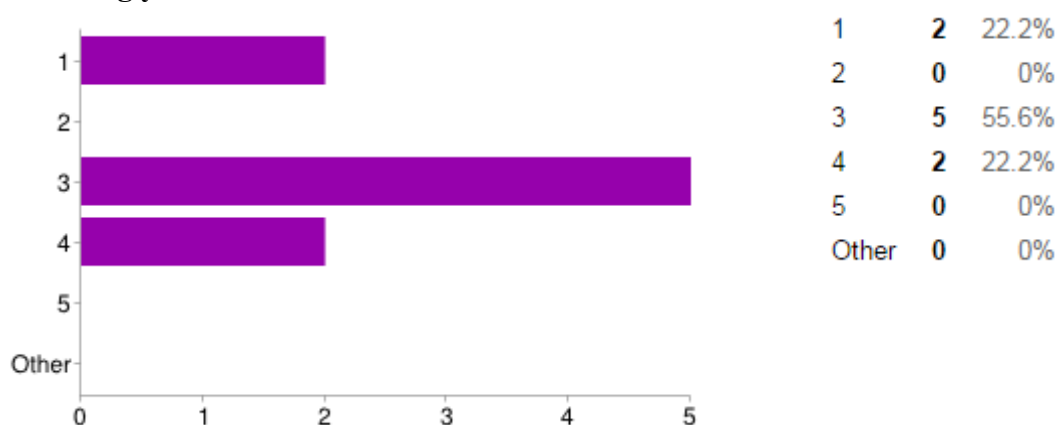
Rites of passage, training dealing with multi-cultural diversity for S.O.S. & Resident Advisor

No answer given

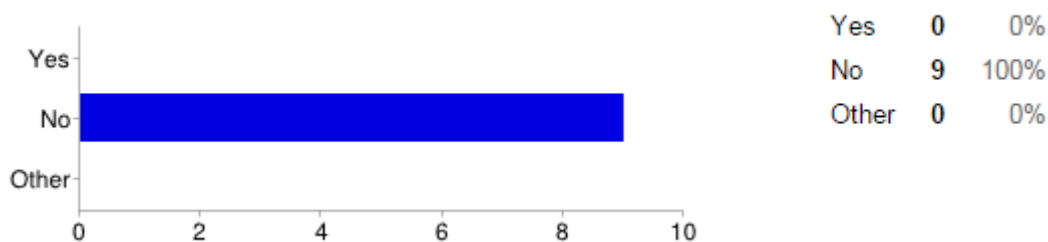
Rites of Passage

Family Information

28) How many family members lived in your home during your time at PRU, including you?



29) Did you live with your parents during your time at UNCG?



30) Please explain if there was change in your living status during this time.

Lived on campus away from home

No

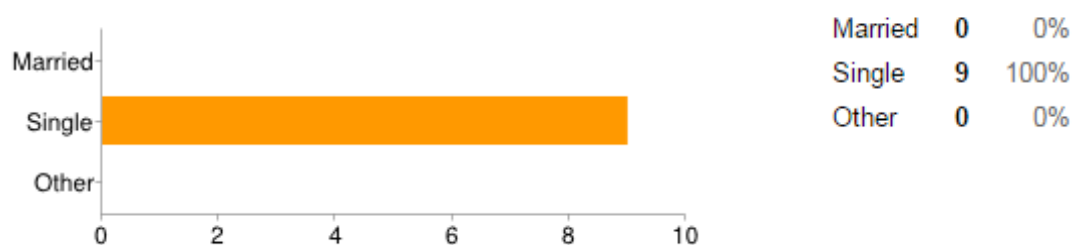
n/a

Moved off campus junior year

No answer given

I moved on campus. I later got an apartment in Greensboro.

31) What was your marital status during your time at UNCG?

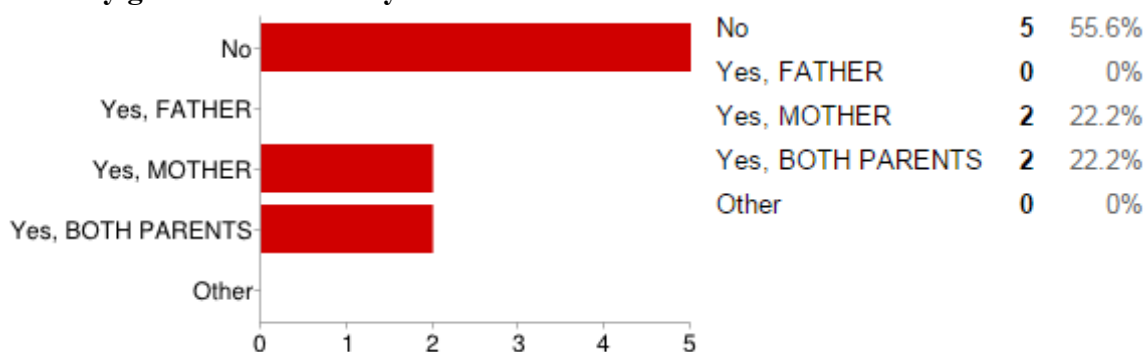


32a) Father/Guardian occupations during this time at PRU:

Unemployed
 Electrical Engineer
 Navy
 deceased
 No answer given
 Post Office Worker
 Pastor & Electrician
 Practice manager - Duke health Services

32b) Mother/Guardian occupations during this time at PRU:

Budget Analyst
 Pastor & Instructor for Daycare
 Administrative assistant - Wake Med
 City of Durham
 Social Worker
 none
 Accountant
 No answer given
 Deceased

33a) Did your parent(s)/guardian(s) with whom you lived prior to your 18th birthday graduate from a 4-year institution?**33b) If "Yes", please list the institution your Father/Guardian attended:**

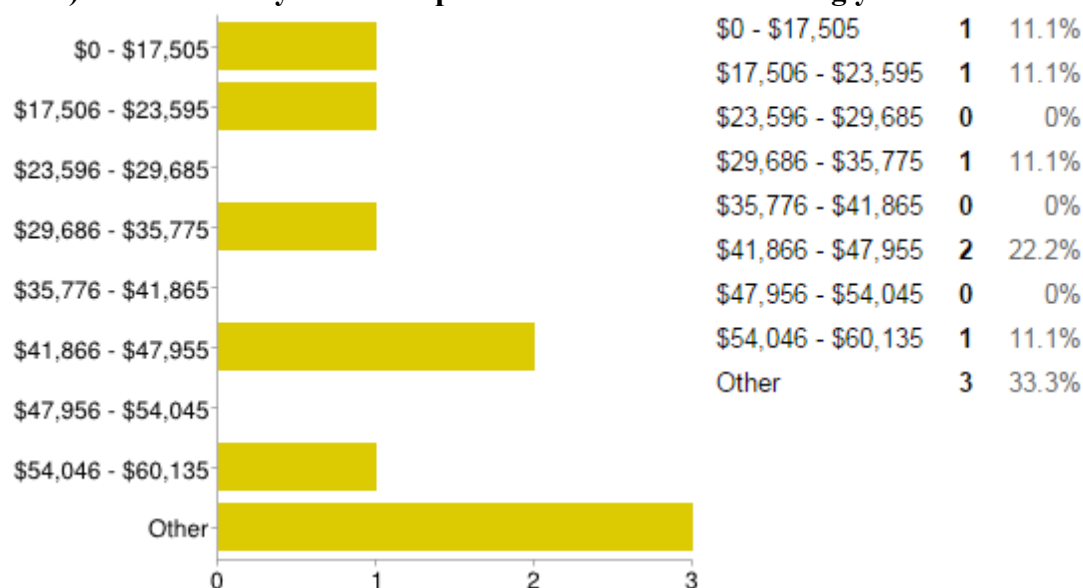
Tuskegee Institute
 North Carolina State

33c) If "Yes", please list the institution your Mother/Guardian attended:

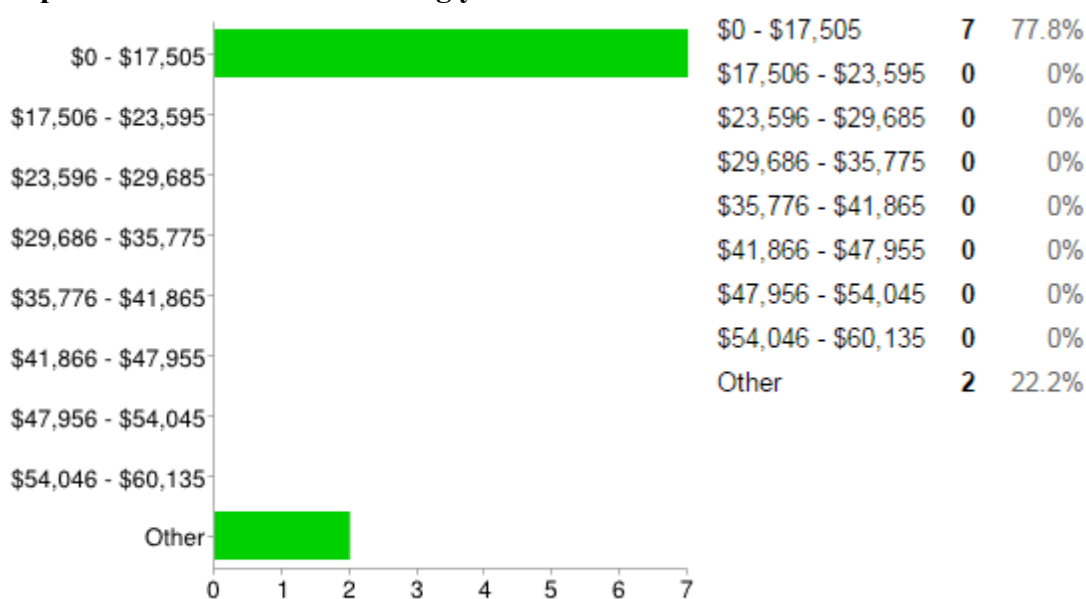
Bennett College
 Virginia Tech
 Fayetteville State University
 East Carolina University

Financial Information

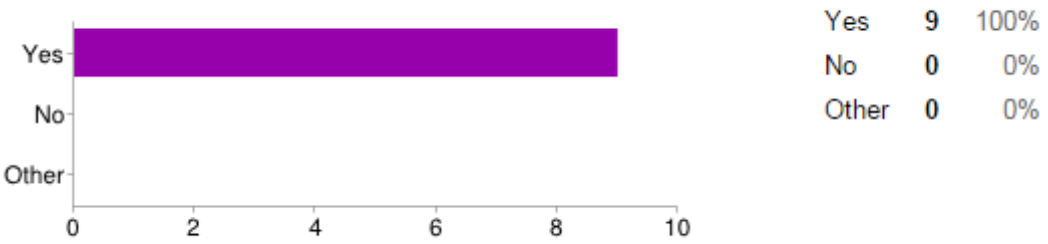
34a) Please indicate your parent(s), guardian(s), or spouse's Annual Income (after taxes) as classified by the US Department of Education during your time at PRU:



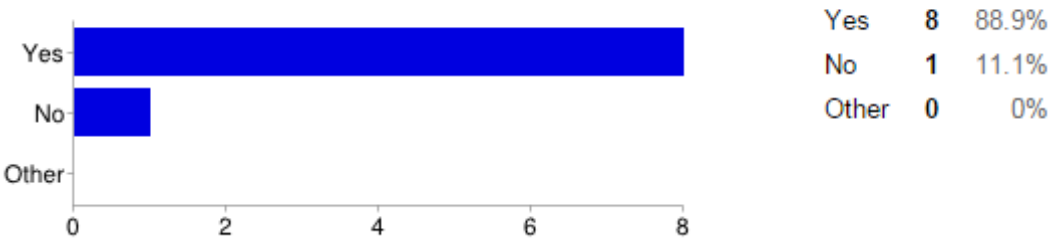
34b) Please indicate your Annual Income (after taxes) as classified by the US Department of Education during your time at PRU:



35) Did you ever apply for financial aid during your time at UNGC?



36a) Were you employed at a job during your time at UNGC?



36b) If yes, how many hours per week did you work (WORK STUDY)?

20

36c) If yes, how many hours per week did you work (OTHER)?

40
25
30
20
20-25
10
35-40

APPENDIX D
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Demographic information	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Ethnicity		
Black/African American	9	100%
Gender		
Male	9	100%
Citizenship		
U.S. Citizen	9	100%
Sexual orientation		
Bisexual	1	11%
Gay	1	11%
Heterosexual	6	67%
Same-gender loving	1	11%
Age		
17-19	4	44%
23-25	2	22%
25 or older	2	22%
Other	1	11%
Religious affiliation		
Baptist	1	11%
Christian-Non-denominational	1	11%
Christian	5	56%
Not Applicable	1	11%
Home state		
Maryland	1	11%
North Carolina	8	89%
Hometown		
Bowie, MD	1	11%
Cary, NC	1	11%
Charlotte, NC	2	22%
Durham, NC	2	22%
Fayetteville, NC	1	11%
Knightdale, NC	1	11%

Demographic information	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Oxford, NC	1	11%
Education		
Public high school	8	89%
Magnet high school	1	11%
Year of high school graduation		
2004	1	11%
2005	1	11%
2006	1	11%
2007	1	11%
2008	2	22%
2009	3	33%
Semester of enrollment at PRU		
Fall 2004	1	11%
Fall 2005	1	11%
Fall 2007	1	11%
Fall 2008	1	11%
Fall 2009	3	33%
Other	1	11%
Status at enrollment		
First-time freshman	8	89%
Second-year freshman	1	11%
Retention		
Attended another 4-year institution prior to PRU	1	11%
Transferred to PRU from another institution	1	11%
Transferred from PRU to another institution	1	11%
Graduation from PRU		
Graduated	6	67%
Did not graduate	3	33%
Length of matriculation at PRU		
Graduated within 4 years	5	56%
Did not graduate within 4 years	4	44%
Number of family members living in the home while at PRU (including the participant)		
1	2	22%
3	5	56%

Demographic information	<i>n</i>	Percentage
4	2	22%
Parents'/guardians' educational status		
Neither graduated from a 4-year institution	5	56%
Only the mother graduated from a 4-year institution	2	22%
Both graduated from a 4-year institution	2	22%
Parents', guardians', or spouse's annual income (after taxes)		
\$0 - \$17,505	1	11%
\$17,506 - \$23,595	1	11%
\$29,686 - \$35, 775	1	11%
\$41,866 - \$47,955	2	22%
\$54,046 - \$60,135	1	11%
Participants' annual income (after taxes)		
\$0 - \$17,505	7	78%
Other	2	22%
Financial aid		
Applied for	9	100%
Employment status while at PRU		
Employed	8	89%
Unemployed	1	11%